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[LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.]

BRIDGED BY HIS LOVE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Clytie Cranbourne," "The Golden Bowl,"
"Poor Loo," "Bound to the Trawl,"
"Fringed with Fire," &c., &c.

CHAPTER V.

A BITTER PARTING.

Two little children, seeing and hearing,
Hand in hand wander, shout, laugh and sing.
Lo, in their bosoms, wild with the marvel,
Love, like the crocus, is come ere the spring.

To Rosie's intense disappointment her suggestion that she and Harry should run away from South Hall before Lady Mabel returned found no favour in the boy's eyes.

Had Harry been nearer her own age, perhaps he might have jumped at the notion; but a youth of sixteen knows far more of the world than does a girl of twelve, and Harry Harcourt knew that the expedient which Rosie, in her childish innocence, proposed was not to be thought of for a moment.

"It can't be done, darling," he said, smoothing her hair away from her forehead and trying to smile upon her. "We couldn't really hide ourselves, and we shouldn't know how to live if we could, and everyone who now loves us would be so angry with us that we should never be forgiven. We must wait a few years. I must work, and study, and fight my way to the front,

as other lads have had to do before me; and you must grow up to be a clever, good, and beautiful woman, and when I have succeeded I shall come to you and ask you to keep the promise you have made me to be my wife. We must look forward to that time, pet, and bear the grief of separation till then as well as we can."

The girl sobbed.

The plan of running away together had seemed to her so easy of execution, and she had looked forward to the adventure as one that could be productive of nothing but unmixed enjoyment—a kind of excursion into fairy-land, in fact, and she was grievously disappointed to be assured by Harry that her notable scheme was impracticable.

It was quite certain, however, that she could not run away alone; there would be even less fun in such an adventure than in being taken away by Lady Mabel. So, as Harry would not be persuaded to accompany her, she could only yield tearfully to what was inevitable, and shrink away from him and refuse for a time to be comforted.

This did not last long, however, she was so terribly lonely, and a chill seemed to hang over the house, and a mystic dread of that chamber in which lay the "sleeping dead" made Rosie half afraid to go through the passages, up the staircase, or into the vacant rooms alone, and therefore Harry's constant companionship became almost a necessity to her.

There was no supper for the reapers this evening; the overseer gave them money instead, and his wife came to the Hall to help the housekeeper in her duties.

For the opinion had become general that with

Mrs. Vane's death Mrs. Harcourt's position in the household must be changed.

"She must either go away or she must have an older woman—a relative of her own or the squire's—to live with them," people said; and even while Mrs. Vane was unburied hints to this effect were given both to the bereaved husband and his housekeeper.

"Get a whole almshouse full of old women to come and live here, but don't you and the boy leave me," Mr. Vane had said to Mrs. Harcourt when a neighbour who had given him to understand "what the world said" had taken his departure.

And Mrs. Harcourt had replied simply, but with averted head:

"Very well, we will stay as long as you wish us to remain."

Then the matter dropped, but a few days later Mrs. Powell, an elderly lady, the poor widow of a curate, and a distant connection of the Vane's, came to South Hall on a visit of indefinite length, and thus satisfied the scruples of Mrs. Grundy.

And meanwhile the sad days ran their appointed course. The funeral took place, and the gloom that had hung over the house for nearly a week was lifted off.

Blinds were pulled up, windows thrown open, fresh air was allowed to come into the rooms, and the inmates were once more able to breathe freely, and were no longer under the necessity of speaking in hushed tones, as if fearful of waking one who would never wake in this world again.

The squire learned to feel keenly the void which his wife's death had left, and more than once he found himself on his way to her room, only

to stop suddenly at the door of the chamber and remember (with an aching heart that it was empty.

Poor Rosie was perhaps the one most to be pitied at this time.

They all loved her; they all wished to keep her with them; but they all likewise felt that Lady Mabel Marmion had the strongest legal claim to be the girl's guardian, and, as she chose to enforce it, resistance was impossible.

So the squire explained to the child, when two days after the funeral a letter arrived from her ladyship saying that she should follow it in the course of a day or two, and adding that, for the sake of all concerned, the writer hoped Mr. Vane would use his influence with Rosalind to induce her to see in what direction her duty lay.

"There will always be a home for you here, dear," the squire had said when he had shown the letter to the sorrowful girl, "remember that. If ever you want a home, or if your aunt is unkind to you, or if you are unhappy, South Hall will always have its doors wide open for you, and there will be loving hearts under its roof to welcome you. I shall tell your aunt so when she comes; but much as I'd like you to stay I can't keep you here against her will."

"And you really think I must go, uncle?" asked the girl, sadly.

"Yes, my dear, I am sorry to say that I do."

Rosie hung her head and her heart sank heavily.

This decision of the squire's was equivalent to a decree of banishment; if he thought she ought to go away then indeed her last hope was taken from her.

Mrs. Harcourt and even Harry spoke to her in the same strain till the girl felt crushed and heartbroken.

"You don't care a bit for me," she exclaimed, passionately, while the tears rushed to her eyes when Harry was trying to convince her that they must part for the present, and wait and hope for happier times.

The boy's face became pale as he replied:

"I love you better than my life, Rosie, and it is because I love you so dearly that I feel we must do nothing now that would separate us in the future. I am older than you, darling, and I know that to run away together would not only be very wrong but would be ridiculous; besides, we should be followed and brought back directly and I should be blamed and disgraced for having persuaded you to go, and it would always be remembered against me, while your friends would have a better reason than ever for keeping us apart, and they would make you marry somebody else, and we should be always divided. It is because I would bridge the gulf that yawns between us that I school myself to work and wait. Can't you understand, Rosie, that one may love something so dearly that for the sake of winning it some day we leave it for a time, though earth could afford no greater happiness than to grasp it at once? Cannot you feel, pet, how much harder it is for me to say to you that you ought to go than to persuade you to remain?"

Rosie made no reply, but she hid her face on his shoulder, trying to stifle her sobs.

They were sitting in an arbour in the garden within view of the principal entrance to the house.

Lady Mabel was expected to-day, or to-morrow at furthest, and Rosie had made one last appeal to Harry to save her from the guardianship of her aunt.

We have heard how he answered, and as he was still soothing the tearful girl a voice which grated unpleasantly upon the ears of both said, with a scornful laugh:

"What a romantic tableau! Really, Mr. Vane, you must admit that it is quite time that I took my precocious niece away, your housekeeper's son is much too handsome to be harmless."

Mr. Vane frowned, Harry flushed, but Rosie failed to understand the sting of the remark, and consequently did not feel it; she was conscious, however, from the woman's tone, that

her intention was to say something slighting of Harry, so, wiping her tear-stained eyes, she advanced to meet her aunt and the squire, and said, with some spirit:

"Harry has been persuading me that it is my duty to go with you, Aunt Mabel, that's what I've been crying about. I wanted to run away and hide myself from you and—" she was going to say, "Harry wouldn't come with me," but instinctively, though she knew no harm in it, she checked herself and substituted "He said it would be wrong, and so," with another sob, "I am going to do as he wishes me."

"I must be a terrible ogress to require so earnest an advocate," replied her ladyship, with a sneer; "but I am glad that you are going to act sensibly for once, whoever may have induced you to depart from your usual practice; we start for London to-morrow, I have only just arrived and I am tired," to the squire, "I think I'll go and see your housekeeper."

And she went a few steps towards the house, then turned and called Rosie to join her.

The girl obeyed, and from that minute Lady Mabel strove to keep her niece constantly by her side, thwarting every effort which she made to get away from her to pay a last visit to her old haunts, to say farewell to her old friends and pets.

This was an unwise system to adopt with such a girl as Rosie, for the spirit of rebellion in her was always ready to rise in defiance of tyranny and coercion, while she was the most easily-managed child in the world when treated with affection and kindness.

Lady Mabel's forced companionship was becoming irritating. She accompanied Rosie to the wheat-field where the reapers were at work, and there took upon herself to make some pitying remarks about the poor people who had to work so hard. She had previously managed to drive Harry away, to make herself offensive to Mrs. Harcourt, to patronise the "lame cat" as she called Mrs. Talbot, and to put the squire in a fury, and through it all she had not for a moment lost sight of her niece, and when she returned to the drawing-room she still kept the child by her side.

"Where are you going now, Rosalind?" she asked, sharply, looking up from a novel which she had brought with her and had been reading by fits and starts.

The girl was leaving the room, as she believed unobserved.

"I shan't be long," she replied, and was closing the door after her when her ladyship cried, imperiously:

"Where are you going I say? Wait!"

There was no waiting.

Bang went the door, off rushed Rosie as fast as her feet could carry her, out by the back door, through the farm yard, never pausing for a moment till she had got round to that side of the house where stood the duck pond and beyond it some huge ricks of corn and hay, some of the former being in process of erection.

As Lady Mabel was wholly ignorant of the geography of the place, as well as of the direction which her wayward niece had taken, she saw it was useless to attempt to follow her herself, and the servants would render her no assistance; indeed, they evinced a more than usual amount of stupidity upon being questioned, and replied: "Her be gone out to some o' t' orchards belike, but ef yow doant know which way 'er went us can't foind 'er. Her'll be hoam by tay time, vash enough."

Rosie's instinct had not led her wrong; at the spot where she paused in her frantic run she came upon Harry, who, book in hand, was lying in the shadow of a hay-rick.

The book was a mere pretext; the boy had been thinking too much to read.

He sprang to his feet when he saw who was before him.

"I've run away," volunteered Rosie, with flushed cheeks. "She," with a backward toss of the head, "wouldn't let me go a step without her, so I bolted!"

"And what do you want to do, dear?" he asked, with a glad smile.

"Go and see all the old places, and say good-

bye to them. I'm going to run down to the Beat Meadow and to the Brook Ham, and I'm going to gather some Golden Stubbards to take away with me, and I shall give a last feed to my ducks and chickens, and I must give Merry-legs a piece of sugar too. I wonder if I shall have a pony where I am going," with a sigh.

"You shall have one when we are married," said Harry, confidently.

"Do you think we ever shall be married, Harry—really and truly?" she asked, with grave earnestness.

"We shall, if we live, and if you don't change your mind," the youth replied, with equal gravity.

"Oh! depend upon it, I shan't change my mind," with a glad laugh, "I shall be only too glad to get away from Aunt Mabel. But come along, do; I mean to be as cheerful as I can this last day, and I must go and say good-bye to the dear old places where I have been so happy."

Then they ran off hand in hand, and Squire Vane, who had seen this meeting and heard what the children had said without making his presence known to them, sighed as he muttered to himself:

"Poor things, let them dream on, they'll one day have a sad awakening."

Then he made his way to the house, surmising from what Rosie had said of her method of escape that Lady Mabel would be inquiring for him.

He was right, her ladyship was asking for him, and her ladyship made so many disagreeable remarks about Rosie, and Harry, and Mrs. Harcourt that the squire was very nearly losing his temper.

Indeed he went so far in that direction as to tell Lady Mabel plainly that only evil-minded old women who must be thoroughly bad themselves would attribute such motives to others. He said that Mrs. Harcourt was a gentlewoman, that her son would one day be a lad to be proud of, and that at his death he should leave the greater part of his property between Harry and Rosie.

"So you'll please not to call him a plough-boy or a beggar again, my lady," concluded the squire, with dignity, "for he's neither one nor t'other; I'd be proud to be the father of such a son, or to see him marry my daughter, if I had one."

Then he left the room, afraid to trust himself any longer in Lady Mabel's irritating company.

So the last day of Rosie's stay at South Hall died out.

Because their last evening together should be cheerful Mrs. Harcourt, departing from their usual custom, gave the workmen their supper in the kitchen and provided a meal which her ladyship could regard as a very late dinner.

There was neither soup nor fish, but there were boiled fowls and ham, roast ducks and beef in abundance, followed by tarts and custards and cream, and though the shadow of their recent bereavement was still upon them they did justice to the good fare provided, and even Lady Mabel for the time being condescended to be gracious.

They were up early the next morning, but there was no last run in the fields for the tearful Rosie.

She was dressed in a handsome black travelling dress which her aunt had brought for her, and her ladyship had also decorously assumed the garb of mourning; but there was triumph in her face and in her air and carriage as she saw Rosie's trunks lifted with her own into the light cart that was to carry them to the railway station, and she herself mounted the phaeton by the side of the squire, while Mrs. Harcourt with Rosie and Harry entered the basket carriage.

Lady Mabel would have dispensed with this leave-taking, but Rosie and her friends wished it, so she was fain to submit.

"I never saw so much kissing and hugging in my life before," she said, contemptuously, as the train in which she was seated moved slowly out of the station.

But Rosie made no reply; probably she did not hear her.

She was leaning out of the carriage window waving her hand to the dear friends from whom she was so ruthlessly parted, straining her tearful eyes to catch the last glimpse of those she loved, ere she turned to the cold, hard woman who was henceforth to be her guardian, and her ruler—perhaps!

CHAPTER VI.

THROUGH THE GATES OF FASHION.

Nature to her was more than kind,
'Twas fond perversity to dress
So much simplicity of mind
In such a pomp of loveliness.

MORE than five years have passed since that sad parting at Cotherthorpe Station.

It is the month of May, and to-morrow Her Majesty holds her first drawing-room for the season.

There is much fluttering in the hearts of many fair damsels who are looking forward to making their first bow before the Queen, and much bustling importance on the part of chaperones who are to present them, for this season is expected to be more than usually brilliant, and it is whispered that several new beauties will on this twelfth of May make their first appearance in the great world of fashion.

Of these, our little country maiden, Rosie Redesdale, is one.

The promise of her girlhood has been more than fulfilled, and her beauty now, in comparison with what it was when we last saw her, is as the splendour of the newly-opened rose to the vague possibilities half-hidden in the early bud. Hers is a purely English type of face—beautifully moulded, slightly proud, with a singularly clear, transparent complexion, in which the rival roses of York and Lancaster seem to vie with each other for pre-eminence, with eyes which are large and full, dark as violets, liquid-looking as sapphires, arched and fringed with dark brown brows and lashes and surmounted by a broad, white forehead, upon which short golden brown curls cluster, while branches of blue veins can be seen through the exquisitely transparent skin, marking her temples with delicate tracery. Her soft wavy hair no longer hangs wildly about her neck and shoulders, but is gathered into a simple knot at the back of her well-shaped head.

But it is her mouth that is so winning in its perfect loveliness, it is pure as an infant's, a smile seems to dwell for ever in its corners, and the sweet lips are so bright and so beautiful that they might tempt a Turk to renounce his dreams of future hours could he but hope for one long kiss from her.

In figure she is as lovely as she is in face. Not too tall, graceful as a willow, and with much of the soft round outline of the Medicean Venus, it is scarcely to be wondered at if her friends look forward to her being the reigning belle of the London season, and if they also expect her to do well for herself and for them in the matrimonial mart which she is about to enter.

This evening she is clad in a white cashmere dressing-gown trimmed with pale blue ribbon and soft lace, and she sits in her own room looking dreamily at her Court dress that is to be worn on the morrow.

The Countess of Killbrook, the wife of her mother's brother, is going to present her, and she is herself a guest of the Killbrooks, who have come to town solely on her account.

They have only hired a furnished house in Belgravia, for the Killbrooks are as poor as they are proud, but this evening they have a dinner-party going on, and Rosie at her aunt's desire has not appeared among the guests.

"I don't wish anyone to see you till you are presented, my dear," Lady Killbrook had said, with her usual disregard for the feelings of others. "The dinner-party to-day is only a small one, given by your uncle for political

reasons, and you will have plenty of that kind of thing when you have once come out. You may count this as the last quiet evening that you will spend for some months to come."

So Rosie submitted, though unwillingly. She would like to have been present at the dinner party, for she had led a strictly secluded life since she had been taken away from South Hall, and she had never yet been to a "grown-up" party in her life.

Lady Mabel had kept a strict guard upon her sister's daughter.

She had engaged a governess and masters for her; she had taken her to France, Germany, and Italy as part of her education; but she had always treated her as a child, always kept her in the background, and had invariably left her in the care of a governess when she herself went to any kind of entertainment or festivity, or when she received any of her fashionable friends. Thus the girl had never yet tasted the intoxicating cup of pleasure which she is so often told she may soon quaff without restraint or hindrance.

Thinking impatiently of these things as she sits by the fire in her bedroom—for the evenings are still chilly—her eyes rest upon the shimmering silk upon the bed, and her thoughts wander back to her life at South Hall, and more particularly to the last few weeks of her stay there.

A soft smile and warm flush pass over her face as she thinks of Harry Harcourt and the love passages between him and herself.

How well she remembers her petulance and childish anger, and her wild, passionate assertions that he did not love her, because he—more sensible than herself—would not run away with her when she suggested it.

"How was Harry?" she wondered, "and where was he? and what was he doing? and," with a more personal wonder, "had he quite forgotten her—had he ceased to love her?"

She smiled as she pondered over this latter question, and yet she would not have liked to know that she had been forgotten. True, she had never seen Harry or heard from him directly since they had parted that morning at the railway station; but, for all that, she could not believe that he had quite forgotten her, nor—so far will girlish vanity go—that he had ceased to love her.

Only twice in this long interval of time had she heard from Mr. Vane, and then Lady Mabel had opened the letters before they had reached her hands.

One of these letters was to tell her that he and Mrs. Harcourt were married, but that there was always a home at South Hall for his "little girl," and the second letter announced the birth of a son, adding that there was now a live doll for her to play with if she would come.

"And all your chances of sharing the South Hall estate with his housekeeper's son are blown to the winds," commenced Lady Mabel, with a sneer, as she held the letter in her hand. "I thought Mr. Vane's intentions, when he did me the honour to confide them to me, were not worth much."

Rosie made no reply to this. Experience of her aunt's temper and disposition had taught her the folly of appearing to differ from or oppose her, but she wrote a long letter to the squire and his wife, told him she did so without Lady Mabel's knowledge, and begged him not to allude to it when he wrote again.

This she posted herself, but the squire did not write, he was never much of a penman, and with the advent of a son and heir his interest in Rosie fell into abeyance.

So they had drifted apart.

Her leaving South Hall had been one break in her life; to-morrow was to mark another new point of departure.

She is still musing thus when the door opens and Lady Mabel Marmion, in full dinner dress, comes into the room.

"I am afraid you find it dull here, Rosalind," she remarks, indolently approaching the fire.

"Yes, it is dull," was the reply. "I have been warned not to approach the dining-room, draw-

ing-room, or even the library. I do think it was unkind of Aunt Carrie not to have let me go down to dinner."

"It was my fault, I wished it. You will understand my reasons later on. But let us change the subject. Your dress for to-morrow is perfect—is it not? And I expect before the year is over there will be a wedding dress wanted for you, my dear."

"Do you think so, aunt?" with calm indifference. "Who do you think will want to marry me?"

"Probably you will not need to ask that question a month hence, Rosalind; but, remember, there will be plenty of moths to flutter round the candle, but only a man of high rank and great wealth will be suitable for you."

"How differently you and Mrs. Vane must have looked upon the world," mused Rosie aloud, but in a dreamy manner; "when poor auntie died she told me that she had married for love, that my dear mother had married for love; and she told me I should never be happy unless I did so too."

"Mary Vane was a fool," here interposed her ladyship, in an angry tone.

"Was she?" with a laugh. "Then I fear I shall be a fool too, for I mean to marry for love."

"What do you say?" sharply. "Has anyone been talking any rubbish to you? Have you seen anybody? What do you mean? What are you talking like this for?"

And in her impatience and anger Lady Mabel rose to her feet and looked as though she would like to trample upon anyone who would dare to thwart her.

"Don't put yourself out, aunt," with a laugh.

"I have not seen anybody without your knowledge, you take good care of that, and I am not tempted to fall in love with the page or the footman. But what I tell you is quite true, I am not thinking of any particular person; still I don't mean to marry anyone that I don't care for."

Lady Mabel breathed freely again. As a theory, marriage for love was all very well and was very pretty, and while the theory did not much apply to any definite person it did not much matter.

Before she could make any further comment, however, her brother's wife, Lady Killbrook, made her appearance in her niece's bedroom.

"I am so tired," she said, throwing herself into a chair; "dinner parties of stupid people bore one dreadfully. Fortunately Killbrook and Maltby and the bishop had to get down to the House pretty early, so they are gone; next time I shall have a reception afterwards. You filled up those invitations, Rosalind?"

"Yes, aunt."

"You seem dull, child; but you have lost nothing through not being down to dinner, I assure you. I had numerous inquiries about you, however, and young Lord Oaklands frankly told me that he should not have come but for the hope of seeing the new beauty and forming an opinion about her before she came out."

"Complimentary to you, aunt," with a smile.

"So I told him; but he thinks himself privileged to be rude, he has twenty thousand a year already, and will one day be a marquis; he only came of age a year ago. By the way, Mabel, wasn't there some arrangement between his father and you that Oaklands and Rosalind should be married when they grew up? What was it? He was in love with her mother or something of the kind."

Lady Mabel frowned. Of all stories this was one she most wished to keep from Rosie's knowledge; she now said, with an assumed carelessness that was far too much studied for it to deceive either of her companions:

"Nonsense. Lord Oaklands's father was in love with my sister, it is true; but that was long before she was married. The attachment was all on his side and he soon got over it, for he married three or four years before she did. By the way, isn't it getting late?"

"Yes, and Rosalind and I will have a hard day of it to-morrow. You had better go to bed,

dear, you will want to look your best in the morning."

Then they kissed the girl and left her, and an hour later she was sleeping soundly and dreaming that she was in a crowd of brilliantly dressed people, and that Harry Harcourt was by her side, looking into her eyes and whispering in low, earnest tones:

"Rosie, I love you."

She remembered this dream when she woke the next morning, and she sighed somewhat sadly as she thought:

"Poor Harry! The stream between us grows wider and wider, and I see no means by which you and I can ever clasp hands across it."

Such thoughts, however, were soon driven out of her mind by the duty of preparing for the business of the day.

She was down-stairs pouring out her uncle's coffee before either his wife or Lady Mabel made their appearance.

A tall, handsome, oldish-looking man was Lord Killbrook, very fair and somewhat weak and anxious looking.

He had cause to look anxious: he was an Irish peer, with an extravagant son and an expensive wife; add to this that he was poor and that his estates were encumbered to the last shilling they would bear before they came into his hands and you will have the key to an explanation of the perplexed, troubled look that so often came over his face.

True, he had married an heiress and a handsome woman to boot, but an heiress often likes to do her full share of spending her own money—her husband's too, for that matter—and a handsome woman in the position of a countess is not often content to live quietly and practise economy for the sake of freeing her husband's estates from their mortgages.

Lady Killbrook certainly was not the woman to do so; she would spend money, she would give entertainments, as well as go to them, she would have her opera box, just as her son would have his hunters, and the business of paying for them all fell upon the earl.

This season Rosie was the excuse.

For the "dear girl's sake" her ladyship must spend the season in town.

She would have found some other plea if Rosie had not been in existence, but at present nothing could serve her purpose better.

As the girl was her husband's niece—not her own—and as she was likewise an orphan and dependent more or less upon her relatives for protection and advancement, Lady Killbrook managed to make her husband and family feel that she was putting herself to much labour and inconvenience for their sake.

It is true that Lady Mabel Marmion might have presented Rosie herself, but in the years gone by fame had whispered light tales about the high-born dame—tales which she scarcely cared to rake up again by pushing herself prominently forward, and she had therefore so impressed upon her brother a sense of his duty to the child of his dead sister that he, poor man, was prepared to make any sacrifice rather than complain.

He faintly smiles as his wife comes into the room.

She is a tall, imperious-looking woman, with blue eyes and black hair, and she is handsome still, though she must be fully fifty years of age.

Not unlike Lady Mabel in many respects, she is nevertheless dark, while the other is fair, and though quite as proud, she is more impulsively kindhearted, and her very selfishness is not so hard and unyielding or so repulsive as that of her husband's sister.

Breakfast is a meal to linger over in this household as a rule, but very little time can be devoted to it this morning, for the Court hair-dresser will soon arrive, and already the two ladies' maids are busy in arranging everything for the important toilettes.

Poor Rosie is weary enough before she is dressed.

Never in her life has she gone through such a long ordeal; but it is over at last, and when she looks at herself in the long mirror she starts

with unfeigned surprise at her own stately grace and loveliness of form and feature.

She might be a queen in her long flowing train and her rich dress of dazzling white, with her feathers and lappets and strings of pearls.

The latter were once the property of her mother, and the girl wears them to-day for the first time.

Lady Killbrook is ready also; she is gorgeous in green and gold, and wears the family diamonds sparkling on her brow and arms and neck—diamonds which marvellously become the stately dame, and which, if they had not been heirlooms, would long since have departed.

She is in rare good temper, pleased with the appearance of her niece, pleased with herself, and quite ready to undergo the fatigue and the tax upon her endurance and patience that going to a Drawing-room entails.

The carriage containing the two ladies starts at a brisk pace, but when they are still some distance from Buckingham Palace the number of vehicles in front prevents them from going at more than a footpace, and at last there is a complete block and they stop altogether.

It is not a very pleasant sensation to sit still and be stared at by an admiring but critical crowd, and more than once Rosie felt her face flush and burn painfully at the too-fixed gaze which she had sometimes to endure.

They move on again slowly, and the carriage is just about to turn in at the palace gates when the colour forsakes the girl's cheeks and she leans forward eagerly and yet with something like fear in her widely opened eyes.

No wonder that she is startled, for there on the pavement within a yard of each other stand two men who seem like ghosts from the past.

Once more that scene in the country lane comes back to her memory, two lads fighting for her love, and now they are both there, looking at her as though she were some beautiful stranger.

But her sudden movement has betrayed her.

A flash of recognition passes over each of their faces, then she is carried on out of their sight.

"How changed they are," is her thought, "how handsome Harry is, and what a perfect gentleman he seems to be; but Ned Milstead looks worse instead of better. Oh, I hope he didn't recognise me."

Her reflections are cut short at this point, however, by the carriage being suddenly pulled up and Lady Killbrook getting out of it.

Rosie is so disturbed by the unexpected glimpse she has had of these once familiar faces and so occupied with the memories of her old life that she forgets to be shy or nervous at the unaccustomed scene, or at the critical glances directed towards her.

She is not even tired of waiting, but endures with perfect equanimity the pushing and struggling and the damage to her dress that are inevitable at a crowded Drawing-room, and when her turn comes she makes her courtesy to the Queen and manages her train as gracefully and with as much self-possession as though she had gone through the same ordeal at least a score of times.

When she and her aunt leave the palace she looks through the carriage window eagerly, but the two faces are no longer to be seen.

Then the doubt comes to her mind, "Did Harry recognise her?" followed by the eager though still unuttered question, "Shall we meet again?"

Well might this thought present itself to her mind, for she is just launched upon the great maelstrom of folly and fashion, and every succeeding dawn will but drift her wider apart from the lover of her childhood.

(To be Continued.)

THE "blue ribbon" at Wimbledon has this year been won for Scotland by Private Ferguson of Campbelltown. Scotland has now won the trophy seven times out of twenty—a proportion which she may regard, if not with

boastfulness, at least with some complacency. Scotch marksmen have gained a fair share of the other trophies of the meeting.

SCIENCE.

NEW USE FOR THE TELEPHONE.—To avoid the inconvenience of having to cut and splice a telegraph cable unnecessarily, as when several lie close together and one only is faulty, it is now suggested to employ the telephone on an auxiliary parallel wire, in which the induction may be sufficiently strong to enable the electricians in charge to read the signals which may be sent into the cable, and so identify it.

NEW TEST FOR ALOES.—Hugo Borntraeger has recently described a test for the detection of aloes, which we have no doubt will prove extremely useful. The liquid, or the cold alcoholic extract of the suspected solid, is shaken up with about twice its bulk of benzol. The benzol, which in the presence of aloes assumes a yellowish green colour, is taken off with a pipette, and agitated with a little strong ammonia. The ammonia will now assume a fine violet red colour, even if not more than one part of aloes had been present in 5,000 parts of the liquid. The red colour is destroyed by acids but restored again by alkalis. Other caustic alkalis may be employed, but none yield such good results as ammonia. In the case of beer the presence of aloes can be demonstrated, without any previous preparation, provided about 14 grains of aloes had been added to the gallon.

THE TOPOPHONE.

THE aim of the topophone, which was invented and patented by Prof. A. M. Mayer last winter, is to enable the user to determine quickly and surely the exact direction and position of any source of sound. For use on ship-board it would probably form one of the fixtures of the pilot-house or the "bridge," or both.

In most cases arising in sailing through fogs, it would be enough for the captain or pilot to be sure of the exact direction of a fog horn, whistling buoy, or steam whistle; and for this a single aural observation suffices. Everyone has twirled a tuning fork before the ear, and listened to the alternate swelling and sinking of the sound, as the sound-waves from one time reinforce or counteract those from the other time.

The topophone is based upon the same fact, namely, the power of any sound to augment or destroy another of the same pitch, when ranged so that the sound-waves of each act in unison with or in opposition to those of the other. Briefly described, the topophone consists of two resonators (or any other sound-receivers) attached to a connecting bar or shoulder rest. The sound-receivers are joined by flexible tubes, which unite for part of their length, and from which ear tubes proceed. One tube carries a telescopic device by which its length can be varied.

When the two resonators face the direction whence a sound comes, so as to receive simultaneously the same sonorous impulse, and are joined by tubes of equal length, the sound waves received from them will necessarily reinforce each other, and the sound will be augmented. If, on the contrary, the resonators being in the same position as regards the source of sound, the resonator tubes differ in length by half the wave length of the sound, the impulse from the one neutralises that from the other, and the sound is obliterated.

It is obvious that with such a help the pilot in a fog need never be long in doubt as to the direction of a warning signal; and if need be he can without much delay, by successive observations and a little calculation, determine, approximately at least, the distance of the sounding body.



[ALTERED CIRCUMSTANCES.]

HER HUSBAND'S SECRET.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Frank Bertram's Wife," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNDER A NEW NAME.

A rose by any other name
Would smell as sweet. SHAKESPEARE.

It seemed to Harold Ashley that he had never heard or even dreamed of such a mystery as seemed to encircle Rosamond; except that broken confidence in the train she would tell him nothing.

He spent a sleepless night thinking of the fair girl he had loved so well and whose fate seemed so strangely sad. The more he considered the matter the more fatal it seemed; if Lord Fairleigh's first wife was really alive, as he saw poor Rosamond actually believed, what was to be done?

Although he had been the earl's rival, Harold could not condemn him utterly, his position was too cruelly hard for that.

He spent the early morning hours in trying to think of some plan to benefit Rosamond. About eleven he called at her temporary refuge and asked to see her. To his amazement she was gone. In vain he interrogated the servants, they could only tell him the lady had breakfasted early and left, she had not told them where she was going.

Harold Ashley drove to the railway station, he fed porters right and left, he cross-questioned them as only a lawyer can. To no avail. There

had been several trains to all parts—it was a junction—several ladies had travelled by each, some of them were alone. In short, Harold was most utterly baffled; the clue was lost, only one thing seemed certain, the beautiful girl whom all London believed to be Countess of Fairleigh had taken her fate into her own hands and was a lonely wanderer from home and friends.

And she, Rosamond, she loved Harold Ashley almost as a brother, she trusted him entirely, but it was such bitter pain to see one who had known her in happier days, such anguish to see his pity on his face, that she had run away from him. All she wished, all she seemed to have energy left to scheme for, was that she might be alone where no one knew her secret or her history.

She went to the station early before she thought anyone likely to notice her would be stirring. She looked at the time tables until they made her eyes ache, and then she selected a quiet, retired place on the east coast and took a ticket there. The train was a parliamentary one, hardly a passenger who started from Fordham remained in the train when it reached Newbeach. It was a quiet, unpretending place, little more than a village.

Rosamond felt thankful for the few purchases she had made at Torgate, they enabled her to appear just what she called herself, someone who had come to stay a few days at Newbeach just to see if the place suited her.

"Do you know of any apartments?" she asked the sleepy-looking porter.

The man scratched his head reflectively and then remembered the fancy shop in the High Street.

"There's Miss Jenks, miss," he said, slowly, "she did say as she'd not mind letting a room or two."

Rosamond left her few possessions at the railway station and walked up to the quaint, rambling old High Street. There was no mistaking the place, it was the only pretence to anything of the fancy order in Newbeach, walls

and canvas were tastefully displayed, children's toys, ornamental stationery, and even gloves and ribbons.

Rosamond hesitated one moment, then she boldly knocked at the private door. A red-haired, shock-headed girl of about fourteen, covered from top to toe with a long pinafore, at last made her tardy appearance.

"Can I see Miss Jenks?"—she had noticed the name over the door—"I wish to ask about the rooms."

The stolid-looking child disappeared before she had completed the sentence, leaving her standing outside the closely slammed door. To a lady who for two years had had her every wish anticipated by attentive servants, it was rather a strange proceeding, but Rosamond was too full of her trouble to notice it.

"You're to go round by the shop door," declared the young domestic, returning, "and Miss Jenks will speak to you there."

Rosamond smiled in spite of her agony; it was such a novel form of address. Obeying her young commandant she entered the shop. A tall, thin woman with wiry ringlets of iron-gray and a very rusty black dress came forward.

"And glad enough I am you're come," was her greeting, "here have I been a whole fortnight without an assistant, and at fifty-two it's more than I care about."

Rosamond stared.

"You'd better take off your things and set to work at once. I shall be able to put you in the way of the business a little before we shut up."

The ci-devant countess was speechless; at last she found her voice.

"I think there is some mistake, I—"

"I should think there was indeed; why, my dear, here I've been expecting you every day for a fortnight."

"I mean you are mistaking me for someone else, I have come to Newbeach—"

Miss Jenks looked almost as bewildered as Rosamond.

"You answered my advertisement for an

assistant, twenty pounds a year and board, all found except washing?"

"No."

"Well, then it's a great shame, that dreadful girl *Jemima Jones* must have deceived me; she answered the advertisement and agreed to everything, I'm sure I thought she'd come."

A new idea dawned on *Lady Fairleigh*. Why should she not become *Miss Jenks's* assistant, it would be an honest means of livelihood, and nowhere could she be so completely lost to all former friends as serving in a *Berlin-wool* shop in an obscure east-coast watering-place?

"I am looking out for a situation," she began, nervously. "I came here because it was quiet, and I thought I should be able to live cheaply. I know all kinds of fancy work, but I have never been out before."

Miss Jenks eyed her up and down.

"I like your face," she said, "who knows but we might come to terms? I suppose you have good references?"

A sudden thought came to *Rosamond*. When she so hurriedly left the Court she had a little present intended for her maid in her possession; she had transferred it mechanically from one pocket to another, and it was still with her. The maid was one who had just left her, and there was a letter from the housekeeper to go with the present, which was in itself a sort of character.

After a moment's reflection she decided on her course.

"I was maid to the Countess of *Fairleigh*, but I had an illness and did not feel strong enough for service. I've a letter from the housekeeper now."

The letter was on paper bearing the address "*Fairleigh Court*," embossed. The present was a Russian leather purse with the initials "*A. J.*"

Miss Jenks was quite satisfied. She nodded her head approvingly.

"Well, look here, suppose you come on a month's trial, and we shall see if you've any notion of picking up the business. It was a fair business enough once, but my assistant left me to be married, and at fifty-two I don't feel so young as I did."

It was the strangest of chances.

In all her confused ideas of what was to become of her *Rosamond* had never expected to be a shop assistant.

She went upstairs (escorted by the red-haired domestic) to a neat, cheerful bedroom, and there she took off her heavy cloak and smoothed her short hair. She wore a singularly plain dress, the one she had bought at *Torgate*, and yet she looked very dainty and neat.

She went down and found *Miss Jenks* very busy with an influx of customers. Half a dozen of the elder girls from a select boarding-school were purchasing wool and tissue-paper.

Rosamond gave her aid in selecting the colours, and was rewarded by unmitigated staring from the pupils and a whispered inquiry from their governess:

"Who is she?"

Miss Jenks was nothing loth to tell.

This was her new assistant, fresh from London. She had lived in a very high family there; and then the worthy spinster plunged into a flood of gossip, and *Rosamond* picked out skeins of wool and tried to convince a strong-minded young lady that blue and gray are a better mixture than red and green.

"Fourpence halfpenny the wool and twopence the tissue-paper."

Certainly it took a long time to get rich by keeping a fancy shop decided *Rosamond* when the troop of girls swarmed out.

There was not much more to do. Another hour in the shop hearing the prices of various articles from *Miss Jenks* and trying to keep them in her head, then a boy, who from his hair and stolidity must have been brother to the domestic *Rosamond* had first seen, put up the shutters, and *Miss Jenks* and her assistant retired to the shop parlour.

The gas was burning and the cloth was laid for supper.

Poor *Miss Jenks* sat down in the first chair she came to.

"My dear, I am tired. When one comes to fifty-two—"

She did not enter into the details of what happened, but began to take up a canvas mat, a paper of wools and a tapestry pattern.

"It's eight now, and this must be done to-night."

"Shall I do it?" volunteered *Rosamond*.

"You!" in surprise. "Could you? It's for *Lady Airlie*, and she has such good taste. She always sees if anything is the least bit faulty."

"I have often worked for bazaars," and, taking the work from *Miss Jenks's* willing fingers, she sat down to her task, rather relieved by the spinster's proposing the boy should go down to the station for her things.

A few minutes more and supper appeared—steved cheese and radishes, with a jug of mild porter.

Rosamond often thought she had never enjoyed a meal so much. She was so young still that, in spite of the awful desolation that had swept over her life, she could not be altogether miserable.

"Well, it's early days yet, but I think you'll do," declared *Miss Jenks*, when *Lady Airlie's* pattern was ready for her and the young assistant was tracing some embroidery. "But there, it's no use my feeling comfortable. You're sure to marry—they all do."

It occurred to *Rosamond* that if everyone in *Newbeach* married a great many young ladies in other parts would like to migrate there.

"Have you been here long?" she asked.

"Ten years at Christmas; and I have had ten or twelve assistants, and they all married, every one."

"But how did they manage it? I should have thought in a place like this—"

"It's the saloons," groaned *Miss Jenks*; "I can't keep an assistant because of them."

Rosamond inquired mildly of what nature were the attractions of the saloons, and was informed they were merely a large hair-dresser's that with *Miss Jenks's* represented the fashionable shops of *Newbeach*. The hair-dresser kept one assistant, as did *Miss Jenks*, and the two proprietors being friends, the two assistants invariably became something nearer, and left their respective employers to set up a combined fancy and hair-dressing establishment elsewhere.

"It's very hard," said *Miss Jenks*, feelingly. "Both *Mr. Johnson* and I are getting in years, and these perpetual changes are very trying; we never keep an assistant more than a year. And for the last few months their heads are so full of nonsense that they are of no use whatever."

"Why don't you have someone married?"

"*Mr. Johnson* can't afford it," replied *Miss Jenks*. "A married man with a wife and family would want more than he could afford, and the same reason holds good with me. No, it's very hard, we must have young people. Our customers would not like it if we picked out anyone too ugly, and so you see the results. I'm sure the young man who came to the saloons yesterday looks a perfect gentleman. It'll be just the same story over again."

Amelia Jenkins modestly expressed the hope and conviction that her employer was mistaken, then the cloth was removed and the two separated.

Rosamond drew up the blind when she got to the little room allotted to her and tried to wonder how *Hugh* was getting on without her.

That same moon and stars she saw so plainly shone upon the grounds of *Fairleigh Court*, the dear home from which she was exiled.

As she watched them it seemed to her that her heart must break, her agony was more than she could bear.

She was so young, so strong and well. Oh! how hard it was to think that for all time she and *Hugh* were separated, that nothing in the world could bring them together.

One thing she forgot—the poor stricken wife, the creature whose name and rank she had un-

consciously usurped, might be taken; of this emergency *Rosamond* never thought.

She never blamed the man she had called her husband, strange and unnatural though it seems; she never blamed him once—by her own intense love for him she understood his for her. She never wished that they had not met, he had been all too dear to her for that; but she did wish with an unspeakable longing that she had died during those happy wanderings abroad, with her hand clasped fast in his, and the consciousness that no cloud had ever marred their union.

But this could not be, they two who had once been united were now parted wide asunder, they must live out their lives alone, and this was what *Rosamond* found the hardest drop of bitter in her cup.

The days passed, the summer ripened into autumn, the autumn faded into winter, and still *Amelia Jenkins* laboured at the fancy repository. For once *Miss Jenks* and *Mr. Johnson* took heart, for once the hair-dresser's dapper assistant and the devotee to the mysteries of needlework seemed unlikely to make a match.

Charles Brand certainly adored *Miss Jenks's* "young lady," but it was with an adoration of a vague and hopeless kind, almost as a child loves the soft silvery moon, and yet knows quite well she can never be his own.

Everyone liked *Rosamond*; in all *Newbeach* she was a favourite.

Once or twice she had been entrusted by *Miss Jenks* to go to London and make purchases for the benefit of the shop; she went always wrapped up in the heavy cloak she had bought at *Torgate*, and she always executed her commissions at the east-end warehouses, never once did she penetrate to the west.

She had a good taste and a simple honesty which made her invariably do her best for her employer, and the result was that the shop looked up, trade became thriving, and *Miss Jenks* was more than ever enraptured with her young friend.

"You've quite a talent for business, my dear," she used to say sometimes, with an approving shake of her corkscrew ringlets, "it's perfectly wonderful; if ever you marry you must make your husband keep a shop—you'd get a fortune together in no time."

"I shall never marry."

But *Miss Jenks* was incredulous.

Lady Airlie—the great lady of the district, who had been a beauty herself once, and was now a graceful, sweet-faced woman, whose sons had left her for other homes, some for school or college, and whose husband had been taken from her—was charmed with the sad, wistful girl who attended her behests at the fancy shop.

"I am quite sure *Miss Jenkins* has a history," she observed, one afternoon, to *Miss Jenks*, "she looks to me as if she had seen a great deal of trouble."

"I don't think so, please, my lady," remonstrated *Miss Jenks*, humbly. "I never overwork her if I can help it, and she has twenty pounds a year and her keep."

"It is a strange name—*Jenkins*," said the lady, reflectively, "strange for her at least."

"Dear me, my lady, why I know ever so many *Jenkinses*—it is quite an east-country name."

"Has she any relations?"

"She's an orphan, my lady, and has no brothers or sisters; a most well-conducted and proper young woman, never has a creature to see her—not even a friend."

"She must be very dull," pityingly.

"I think not, my lady," with mild firmness; "*Miss Jenkins* is a keen woman of business, she knows it her duty to be obliging and to smile at customers, not to feel dull."

Lady Airlie departed, holding her own opinions still, but thinking, nevertheless, it would be just as well not to express her sympathy for *Miss Jenkins* to that young person's employer for the future.

A few days later *Rosamond* was entreated by *Miss Jenks*, as a great favour, to take some things to the Castle for *Lady Airlie* to select. A few Christmas presents, no very burdensome

parcel, half-a-dozen book-marks, as many purses and embroidered nick-nacks; the whole were of no weight, and in her position our heroine could hardly have refused, however reluctant she felt.

She did feel very reluctant, she had avoided Lady Airlie as much as it was in her power; she never willingly suffered herself to be alone with her.

True, she had never in her other sphere been introduced to her, her ladyship having spent the whole year in absolute seclusion, but for all that she belonged to the order of which Rosamond had been considered an ornament, and for that reason she must shun her—the world which had now closed for Rosamond was open still for Lady Airlie.

So she did not set off to Airlie Castle in a cheerful frame of mind, but yet when she had entered the large gates and seen the noble building facing her, lighted up by the rays of a winter sun, she felt a throb of pleasure—it recalled her home to her. It was a stately pile, as beautiful though not more beautiful than Fairleigh Court, and one sigh for that dear home and another for her lost love who was doubtless there escaped her.

She went up to the grand entrance and asked a tall footman for Lady Airlie.

The man civilly asked her to enter, he knew who she was by having often brought orders to the shop, but there was nothing offensive or familiar in his manner. He showed her into a pretty room, half study, half morning room, and promised to tell his mistress at once.

Perhaps Lady Airlie was engaged, for she kept Rosamond some time waiting.

Forgetting her false position and remembering her true one, the girl glanced about the room for some method of amusing her leisure moments, and then she noticed that a cottage piano was open and a song, her own old favourite, "When sparrows build," was placed on the desk.

It was months since she had seen a piano, and she was passionately fond of music; forgetting her errand, forgetting the immeasurable distance between Miss Jenks's assistant and Lady Airlie, Rosamond sat down to the piano and sang the dear old ballad with all the pathetic sweetness which had charmed Hugh not three years ago.

It charmed someone else now.

CHAPTER XXIV.

JEALOUSY.

Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmation strong
As proofs of holy writ. Othello.

LOOKING back upon it after years of life it always occurred to Lord Fairleigh to wonder that he never guessed the reason of his wife's flight, the cruel error which had pierced her heart, but at the time he never once suspected the truth.

He never quite knew how he dragged through the weary evening, he felt perfectly certain she had not gone to Mr. Ashley; he could allege no reason for the belief, but it was implanted in his breast.

Rosamond, his dainty, cherished wife, was the last woman in the world to act independently.

No post had come in since he left her, if she had really been summoned to her guardian's death-bed the summons must have come through Sir Reginald Dane.

Another man would not have endured this agony of doubt—another man would have gone at once either to Allerton to interrogate the baronet or to Bedford Square to seek his wife, but Hugh, Earl of Fairleigh, pursued neither of these courses.

He was a man chivalrous to a fault where a woman is concerned, he would not let either her old lover or her guardian suspect that he doubted Rosamond, so he sat alone in his splendid house, the time seeming an eternity to him, longing for the morning, when news must surely come—

his only crumbs of comfort his wife's promise to write and the message she had left with the housekeeper, her dear love.

He was up long before daylight wandering about the Court like some uneasy spirit that cannot rest, but his haste availed him little, he was a rich man and he could not break through the forms and ceremonies which seemed such terrible trammels to his impatience.

Letters were delivered at the Court at half-past nine by a walking postman, who usually stayed to breakfast in the servants' hall. Hugh had not the courage to intercept this man and thus learn his fate the sooner.

He was strangely sensitive to public opinion where it might touch his wife, he would not have it said in Blankshire that he doubted her.

So, at half-past nine he sat down to his solitary breakfast, and when the servant brought in the letter bag he directed him to place it on the table as calmly as though his whole heart did not ache with a yearning to know its contents.

Not till the door was closed and the last sound of the man's footsteps had died away did Hugh unlock the bag; there were several missives—both the earl and the countess were popular people.

Hugh laid the letters down one after the other impatiently, he noticed almost like a person in a dream that one was directed in Mrs. Granville's writing and another in Mr. Ashley's. This last he opened; it might throw some light on his wife's strange conduct, but it threw none—it was a simple, kindly note, such as an affectionate guardian would be likely to write to his ward, but there was not one word in it that implied the illness of the writer; on the contrary, the old man declared that when Lady Fairleigh came to town she would find him grown quite young again.

With a heavy sigh Hugh pushed the heap away and took up the newspaper. Not till then did he perceive a plain blue envelope looking like a bill; he was about to put it down unopened when he noticed that the post-mark was Torgate, and he remembered that that was the name of a station between Fairleigh and London. He tore open the envelope eagerly.

He found no detailed letter, no prayer for forgiveness, or plea for weakness, only a wild, incoherent farewell.

"I am going away, Hugh; it's the only thing I can do for both of us. You will know why I go—I can't tell you more than that. Keep our secret, Hugh, for my boy's sake, and think kindly of me. Don't forget me, Hugh, we have been so happy together."

The earl's first thought was that his wife was playing a trick upon him, but there was a pathos about the lines which declared their truth—Rosamond had left him without a word of farewell, had left him probably for ever, and he must live his life out without her as best he could.

Twice, three times did he read the letter, and then he put on it a construction as cruel to himself as to his poor young wife—he believed that Rosamond had left him with Sir Reginald Dane, that the old love had triumphed over the new, and his wife's passionate nature had conquered her sense of truth.

Do not think him mad, do not fancy that trouble had turned his brain.

That Rosamond could actually believe him guilty of bigamy never once entered his head. Her letter easily bore out his idea: "our secret" meant, of course, her disgraceful flight. The reason he would know was the fact of her old engagement.

Hugh wrung his hands and wished he had seen his wife lying in her coffin beside their little child before this thing had come to him.

He was interrupted.

Mrs. Ward herself entered the room without knocking, a liberty unheard of for the respectful housekeeper.

"My lord, will you come? We think she's passing now. Mr. Grey sent me to ask you to come."

The earl followed her to the secret rooms.

One glance at the face of his cousin's widow and he felt that doctor and housekeeper were right.

The wild fury had died out of Bianca's face; her eyes had lost their fierceness. She lay still and calm almost as a tired, worn-out soldier who has not strength to fight any longer.

"Hugh."

For the first time for years he saw the light of reason in her eyes—for the first time for years her voice had lost its passionate ring.

"I'm dying, Hugh, it will all be over soon; tell me what has happened, I have been ill a long while."

"Your husband has been dead some time. He wished you to live here at Fairleigh; it has been a lonely life, Bianca, but we have done what we could."

"I am sure of that," she answered, with the sweet, musical voice that had charmed his heart long years before, "and my sister?"

"She too is gone. She died before your husband."

"Then you will be alone," she said, sadly, "oh, no, but," correcting herself, "I saw a picture once, a girl with an angel face, she will take care of you."

Hugh said nothing, he could not tell her the pain she was causing him.

Mrs. Ward and Susan Green had retreated to the farther room; the doctor was out of ear-shot.

"I was very foolish," said Bianca, slowly, "but it was the title tempted me; can you ever forgive me, Hugh?"

"I forgave you long ago."

"I am young to die, but it is better than living one long night as I have done lately. I always feared the curse would fall on me—so few of us escape it."

He knew it, knew perfectly that they were a doomed race, for did he not fear the curse she spoke of would descend to his firstborn, his eldest child?

"I shall sleep now," said Bianca, slowly. "Good-night. Kiss me, Hugh. I should like to have seen your wife."

And with her hand held fast in his the worn, troubled creature sank to her rest; not four and twenty hours after Rosamond left the Court the woman she had believed to be her husband's wife died in his arms. If only she had waited.

Lord Fairleigh laid her gently back upon the sofa and went out, making a sign to the doctor to follow him.

"What about the funeral?" said Mr. Grey, simply, "she is a Fairleigh, you would surely not have her ashes rest in alien soil."

"She is a Fairleigh, but her husband was so too and he was buried far away. I should wish her to rest with him, he loved her with a devotion I often marvelled at; in their last sleep let them be together."

"But how will you manage matters?"

"Easily, with your assistance; there is a carpenter in London who knows the whole story, he is brother to the woman who nursed her so faithfully, she can be removed by night as she came."

"But Lady Fairleigh?"

"My wife is in London for a few days, doctor, I am most anxious to join her. May I leave my responsibilities here to you?"

"I will do my best, you look fearfully in need of a change. This concealment has told woefully upon you. Oh, Lord Fairleigh, would it not have been better to have made no mystery of it? Even if this poor creature had been taken from you and placed in an asylum she would have been cared for."

"I had promised her husband she should live here, and a promise to the dead must be kept sacredly. Besides, he was very good to me, we were more like brothers than cousins—but, oh, doctor, what a life it has been."

"A life that has done it's best to kill him," thought the old doctor, gravely looking at the thin, careworn face. Aloud he said, cheerfully, "We shall soon have you yourself again now. I shall prescribe a few weeks' travel, you ought to have complete change of air and scene."

"Ay, I feel to want it."

"If Lady Fairleigh is in London, why don't you go and join her there?"

"I think I shall, your having taken all responsibility off my hands releases me of a heavy burden."

When the doctor had gone Lord Fairleigh walked across the avenue where he had sauntered only the day before with his wife, and crossing the fields which divided his lands from Allerton he went up to the house and asked to speak to Sir Reginald Dane.

The servant received his request with open regret not unmingled with surprise; his master was not at home, he had gone up to London the previous evening; the man could not be sure but he believed his master would cross that day to Calais, he was going to Paris for a fortnight.

"Strange weather for Paris," said the earl, half to himself.

The footman did not conceive it his duty to notice this remark.

"Sir Reginald's letters are to be sent to the Hotel d'Angleterre, my lord, if you should wish to write."

"Thank you," and Hugh left the door with a heavy heart.

He had hoped against hope that his suspicions might be false, he had hoped in spite of all that Sir Reginald might be at Allerton and so at one blow disprove his own theory; he went straight to the blue parlour at the Court and once more summoned Mrs. Ward to a private interview.

"I shall go away at once," he said, decidedly, "after what has happened to-day I could not bear to be at the Court for some time. The countess wishes me to join her in London, and we shall then probably make a little tour before returning here. Dr. Grey undertakes the charge of all affairs here, and you can write to me for the present to the care of my bankers; it is really uncertain where we shall be, I want a thorough change."

"Indeed you do, my lord," said the good housekeeper, confidentially, "and the countess seems but delicate; I'm sure her ladyship was as pale as death yesterday—when she bade me goodbye it quite gave me a turn."

"One thing more," began Hugh, a little constrainedly. "I daresay people will call and all that sort of thing. We are travelling on the Continent and you have no idea when we shall be back. That is the announcement I wish given to all callers; you'd better send it to the local papers, we don't want to be bothered by friends while we are away."

Up to London by the express train and fast as cab could take him to Bedford Square. The time for half-measures was past, it was useless to attempt to screen his wife from everyone, from the world at large he would yet do so if it were possible.

Mr. Ashley received him in astonished welcome.

"This is indeed an unexpected pleasure, Lord Fairleigh. How is Rosamond?"

Hugh, Earl of Fairleigh, wrung the old man's hand and tried to speak, but words would not come. His heart felt nigh to breaking. He must denounce his wife and it was a cruel work.

"Surely she is not ill," said the lawyer, anxiously, "I thought her looking a little pale the last time we met."

How could he break it to him? How tell the kindly old man that the Rosamond he had known in her youth and innocence would never cross his path again, that between herself and all former friends she had raised up a gulf impossible to cross?

"She has left me," he murmured, brokenly.

"Mr. Ashley, my wife has left me."

"Nonsense," was the lawyer's practical reply.

"Rosamond is not the sort of girl to do such a thing; she was devoted to you; no man was ever better loved, Lord Fairleigh, than you were by my ward."

"I am sure I thought so."

"Nothing except her own word would make me believe such a thing. The girl who gave up her lover and a princely fortune to save her father's name from dishonour would not forsake her duty."

"That is just it," sighed the earl. "Oh,

Mr. Ashley, for pity's sake why did you not warn me? I never suspected the tie that had bound her to Sir Reginald Dane, I trusted her entirely. I made him my friend. Can't you see that the cruellest drop in my cup is that I myself have contributed to my own misery? I threw my wife constantly in his way."

"What on earth do you mean?" rising and looking at the peer with an angry scrutiny. "What on earth has the fact of Lady Fairleigh's former engagement to do with her having left you?"

"Much. She has left me for him—with him."

Mr. Ashley sat down.

"Lord Fairleigh, you are absolutely senseless! I can see you are suffering from some great agitation or I would not even listen to you. For your wife's sake I will bear with you as much as I can, but have a care what you say of her. Remember I stand in her father's place. I love her as a daughter."

"Do you think I should doubt her without cause? Do you imagine—"

"I imagine nothing, lawyers never do. I think you are beside yourself with jealousy. Pray have you confided these extraordinary suspicions of the Countess of Fairleigh to many people?"

"To no one but yourself."

"That is well. Now, Lord Fairleigh, let us understand each other. I altogether refuse to accept your theory, but from your words I cannot fail to see that your wife has left your home. Will you tell me all you know?"

Hugh asked no better, to pour out some of his troubles was a positive relief.

He told Mr. Ashley that he had left his wife the previous afternoon. She had been rather annoyed because he forbade her roaming in a lonely part of the grounds, but she recovered from this, and they separated the best of friends.

"And when you returned?"

"She was gone. The groom saw her into the London train. She left word you were dangerously ill, and had sent for her."

"I'm not sure that I should make so free with a countess," returned the old gentleman, laughing to hide the real anxiety which was growing on him every minute. "Well?"

"She promised to write; I was on no account to follow her."

"And that was all?"

"She left her dear love to me. It is that which staggers me. I cannot fancy Rosamond practising unnecessary deceit."

"Well, did she write?"

"Yes."

And he placed the letter in the lawyer's hand.

"This complicates matters," returned Mr. Ashley. "But for this letter I could have understood things."

"How?"

"Someone might have told her I was ill. The whole affair might be a ruse, of which your wife was a victim. But this is impossible, if she wrote that letter."

"I am sure she wrote it. The address is feigned, but the inside is her own hand."

"Well, then, poor girl, she is the victim of some terrible mistake, and she used my name—for which I forgive her freely—to keep up appearances before the servants. She evidently thinks her absence from Fairleigh needful for you—at least that is the construction I put on the letter."

The earl shook his head.

"Unfortunately I cannot agree with you. Sir Reginald Dane went to London, also, last night after a prolonged visit at the Court."

"Did he?" indifferently.

"How can you take it calmly?"

"I wish you would do the same. Some terrible mistake makes things look black against your wife, but I am certain you suspect her unjustly, and some day you will find I am right."

Hugh rose to go.

"You mean kindly," he said, as he wrung

the lawyer's hand, "but you cannot see with my eyes."

"I am glad I can't. You'll soon be undeceived, that's one comfort. I suppose you'll seek out Sir Reginald?"

"At once."

And he did.

He reached Paris some twelve hours after the baronet, and, upon calling at the Hotel d'Angleterre, found that Sir Reginald Dane had stayed there one night. He had now gone to an elegant apartment in the Champs Elysees; there was a lady with him, and he thought it would be pleasanter for her.

(To be Continued.)

BUNIONS.

BUNIONS are nearly always the result of badly-fitting boots. Rightly to understand their mode of production, it is necessary to revert for a moment to the natural form of the foot, uninfluenced by the distortion produced by modern boots and shoes. If you look at the foot of a London Arab, or any little shoeless urchin you may come across, you will be surprised to find what a beautiful structure it is. You will see that the big toe is in a straight line with the inner side of the foot. There is a distinct interval between the big toe and the next, so that they do not touch at all. There is a smaller but very appreciable interval between the second and third toes, and you will notice that when the weight of the body is thrown on the foot the third and fourth toes are not in contact.

Now compare this with the foot of anyone who has been accustomed to wear tight-fitting boots all his life, and you will see what a difference there is. All the toes are screwed together like a bunch of carrots, the second or third toe is sticking up over the others, whilst the little toe is pushed under, quite out of sight; the big toe is no longer in a straight line with the inner margin of the foot, but forms a distinct angle with it. We have seen people's feet that have really been quite painful to look at, from the distortion they have undergone. We are fond of laughing at the Chinese for some of their customs, but we should do well to look at home before becoming too critical.

It is a curious circumstance that we, wise people as we think ourselves, should consent to distort our feet and make ourselves miserable with corns and bunions just to please other people; but we do. We should never think of wearing tight, uncomfortable boots if it were not for "the look of the thing."

The shape of modern boots is purely conventional, and is not at all adapted to the natural form of the foot. Boots to fit properly—we mean really properly—must have square toes and should not be made to taper off to a point. There is no reason why a comfortable boot should be ugly, and some of the prettiest boots have been constructed with a due regard to the natural shape of the foot.

THE RATIONS OF OUR SOLDIERS.

PERHAPS few people are aware that it was only in 1793 that our soldiers were allowed more than one meal per day, or that men sick in hospital were granted anything more suited to their individual cases than the salt pork and the rum upon which they, like their comrades in barracks, were forced to subsist. Army doctors had indeed protested against this state of things for many years, but without result; but at last their voice was listened to, and a second meal per day granted to the soldier, namely breakfast, of oatmeal gruel.

So things went on till 1809. In that year, on the recommendation of "the doctors," tea and coffee as substitutes for oatmeal gruel were, "on sanitary grounds," to use the phraseology of

the present day, issued to troops in Walcheren; but that expedition over and collapsed, the luxury of tea or coffee was soon withdrawn, nor was it till 1817 that both took their places as part of the rations for soldiers and for sailors.

Many more years had again to elapse before any further improvement was made in the manner of rationing soldiers. In 1845, the "evening meal" of tea and bread was sanctioned for troops in the United Kingdom, in this respect adopting for home service the custom that had for "any length of time" been followed in India under the "régime" of the dear departed John Compaee Bahadur Jee! Now, in 1880, another leaf is being taken out of the book of Indian experience; the Secretary of State for War has sanctioned an additional allowance of four ounces to the three-quarters of a pound of flesh "with bone" that for a long time past has constituted the daily meat ration of the British lion, as represented by the infantry of the line. The fact has thus been acknowledged that if men are to fight well, and bear up against fatigues, they must be fed well.

DREAMS.

DREAMS are caused by the most trivial things. Whispering in a sleeper's ear will often produce a dream. In changing our position, as we constantly do in sleep, we touch the bed-clothes, etc., perhaps the nose gets tickled, or the sole of the foot, and dreams, painful or pleasant, are the consequence.

These may seem slight causes, but it must be remembered that the mind is ready to fly into the realm of fancy at the slightest intimation. People have often dreamed of spending the severest winters in Siberia and of joining the expeditions to the North Pole simply because the bed-clothes have been thrown off during sleep.

It is said that a moderate heat applied to the soles of the feet will generate dreams of volcanoes, burning coals, etc. A strong light held before the sleeper's eyes is pretty sure to cause him to dream of fire. To some sleepers the sound of a flute fills the air with music, or they dream of a delightful concert. A loud noise will produce terrific thunder and crashing unutterable, and at the same time awaken the sleeper.

THE EGYPTIAN SPHYNX.

NEAR the Pyramids, more wondrous and more awful than all else in the land of Egypt, there sits the lonely Sphinx. Comely the creature is, but the comeliness is not of this world; the once worshipped beast is a deformity and a monster to this generation, and yet you can see that those lips, so thick and heavy, were fashioned according to some ancient mould of beauty—some mould of beauty quite forgotten—forgotten because that Greece drew forth Cytherea from the flashing foam of the Ægean, and in her image created new forms of beauty, and made it a law among men that the short and proudly-wreathed lip should stand for the sign and the main condition of loveliness through all generations to come. Yet still there lives on the race of those who were beautiful in the fashion of the older world, and Christian girls of Coptic blood will look upon you with the sad, serious gaze, and kiss your charitable hand with the big, pouting lips of the very Sphinx.

Laugh and mock if you will at the worship of stone idols; but mark ye this, ye breakers of images, that in one regard the stone idol bears awful semblance of Deity—unchangefulness in the midst of change—the same seeming will, and intent for ever and ever, inexorable! Upon ancient dynasties of Ethiopian and Egyptian kings—upon Greek and Roman, upon Arab and Ottoman conquerors—upon Napoleon dreaming of an Eastern empire—upon battle and pestilence—upon the ceaseless misery of the Egyptian race—upon keen-eyed travellers—Herodotus

yesterday, and Warburton to-day—upon all and more this unworthy Sphinx has watched, and watched like a Providence with the same earnest eyes, and the same sad, tranquil mien. And we, we shall die, and Islam will wither away, and still that sleepless rock will lie watching and watching the works of the new busy race, with those same sad, earnest eyes, and in the same tranquil mien everlasting. You dare not mock at the Sphinx!

WHY WE EAT OYSTERS RAW.

OUR practice in regard to the oyster is quite exceptional, and furnishes a striking example of the general correctness of the popular judgment on dietetic questions. The oyster is almost the only animal substance which we eat habitually, and by preference, in the raw or uncooked state; and it is interesting to know that there is a sound physiological reason at the bottom of this preference. The fawn-coloured mass which constitutes the dainty of the oyster is its liver, and this is little less than a heap of glycogen.

Associated with the glycogen, but withheld from actual contact with it during life, is its appropriate digestive ferment—the hepatic diastase. The mere crushing of the dainty between the teeth brings these two bodies together, and the glycogen is at once digested without other help by its own diastase. The oyster, in the uncooked state, or merely warmed, is, in fact, self-digestive. But the advantage of this provision is wholly lost by cooking, for the heat employed immediately destroys the associated ferment, and a cooked oyster has to be digested, like any other food, by the eater's own digestive powers.

FATE OR FOLLY;

OR,

AN ILL-OMENED MARRIAGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lady Violet's Victims," "Lord Jasper's Secret," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LADY TRESILIAN CALLS AT VERBENA COTTAGE.

Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

THE Dowager Lady Tresilian had begun to alter her opinion with regard to her sons. Sir Herbert had married Clarice Heathcote, Sir Richard's adopted daughter and heiress, and together they shared his wealth—nothing could be more satisfactory; while Rupert, she was sure, was unmarried, waiting for some splendid partie.

And who better than Lady Elaine Glenarm, the Duke of Glenarm's only child?—Lady Elaine, who had lately lost her spirits and appetite since Rupert had left England for Italy, little dreaming he had taken a sweet young wife with him to that renowned land of art, over-charge and bad drainage.

"If only Rupert will marry Lady Elaine, I shall be happy," said Lady Tresilian to her companion, who had started violently at this remark, which spoilt her reading aloud a very fine paragraph in the "Times."

"But some people say he is married already, my lady," Miss Chalgrove answered, meekly glad of a rest and swallowing a black currant lozenge in her nervousness.

"Rupert married?" cried the dowager, angrily—"my favourite son capable of deceiving me? Impossible. No, I think I know my boy better than that."

"Excuse me, your ladyship, if I venture to hint that there is a young lady living with him in Verbena Cottage; he returned from Italy just

two days ago, and if your ladyship doubts the truth of my words—"

Lady Tresilian was not a pleasant woman to arouse, she had a way of "sniffing" out her displeasure like an infuriated or mettlesome charger on the battle-field, and it was more alarming to some nervous people than speech.

She "sniffed" now resentfully and rose to her feet, ringing at the same time for her maid.

She had assumed all her grand old airs of the ancient noblesse again, and given several powerful evidences of her "breed," since Sir Herbert was wealthy, and all her jewellery, silver, and lace were released from the benign protection of Solomons Brothers.

No more struggles over pickled salmon or Digby chicks, no more hidden rejoicing and outward indifference over hampers of hams which benevolent friends sent her from Yorkshire or Scotland. Her pride was no longer fettered; and checking her household expenses could be gone through without a head-ache.

"I will visit Verbena Cottage myself," said Lady Tresilian, with an eagerness she would have called vulgar in another, "and find out who this young lady is. I fancy Bertie hinted something to this effect, and these artists and sculptors are certainly never too moral in their ways; still I hardly think Rupert would so far forget his respect to me as to bring a doubtful person so near Crawley Castle under my very nose."

"But won't it be a shock to your ladyship's feelings if—"

"I know my duty, Miss Chalgrove, and you are not paid to remind me of my feelings, which fortunately are always well under my control; no one ever got anything out of me through being fussy."

Thus snubbed, the companion returned to silent meditations over the article in the "Times," and Lady Tresilian, receiving her handsome satin dolman and black chip bonnet from her maid, set out by herself on a visit of investigation to Verbena Cottage.

"After all, if it is as bad as I suspect, this creature can be got rid of; I daresay the Marquis de Berni will take her off Rupert's hands, and suggest a trip to the East, and that sort of thing. I will make the marquis talk to Rupert as only a man of the world can."

She quickened her pace on leaving the park. She forgot her cold languor and emotionless calm to such a disgraceful extent that something like a vulgar perspiration began to appear on the surface of her blonde skin. Nothing her ladyship hated like looking red—only washer-women and their fraternity ought to suggest the hue of boiled lobsters—and here was she forgetting the traditions of nobility to such a frightful extent as to perspire visibly.

Verbena Cottage was certainly an inviting retreat. Jessamine and honeysuckle pressed in at its little windows, and she heard to her horror the sound of some one singing behind those picturesque casements.

No woman's songs of a morning, and above all a love-song, unless she is happy. The sight of petticoats of any description would have irritated Lady Tresilian at this moment to the last degree, but a voice singing added torture to her mood.

"Good Heavens! If, after all, it should be true," she mused, "and he is married!"

A vision of Lady Elaine appeared before her: The exquisite turn of the throat of this daughter of a hundred earls, the tiny hands, the tinner waist, and the tiniest head. Intellect was lacking in the duke's child, but hair was in profusion, and the smaller the size of the brain the more fashionable. No famous beauty with a faultless profile dare have a large head. What are thought and feeling worth beside form and curve in this age?

Lady Tresilian advanced briskly down the cottage path, passed the laurel-clumps and flower-beds, and rapped loudly with the small knocker on the green-painted door. A bee had got on to her bonnet and tried to extract some honey from the wonderful flower he mistook for a living rose; but in spite of her terror of his sting, she gave her West-end knock, or rather

the one that Tomkins, her footman, gave for her at fashionable mansions.

Lilian stopped singing at its sound; it somehow frightened her, it was a fierce, cruel, aggressive rat-tat; it threatened—it defied.

Looking hastily out of her bedroom window, and drawing aside those cosy blue curtains, she saw a well-dressed, elderly lady shaking her head violently from side to side, and hitting at an insect with a superbly embroidered parasol.

"After all, I have done no wrong," thought Lilian, turning, however, very pale. "She must be Rupert's mother, the Dowager Lady Tresilian."

Lilian knew that her husband wished his marriage kept a secret from this haughty woman, and rather dreaded the interview.

She ran hastily downstairs and opened the hall door at once—her golden hair tied back with a piece of pale-blue ribbon, looking like one of the angels painted by the Italian masters.

This blue ribbon and these floating tresses—above all, the short white dress in which Rupert had been painting her, which gave the effect of "costume," and anything but severe respectability, to Lady Tresilian's mind—yet relieved her fears.

This was no wife surely, this wild, shrinking, pretty creature, but some actress or model that dear, tiresome son of hers had picked up in Italy.

Lady Tresilian's notions of the marriage state were not, strictly speaking, ecstatic. Wives, in her opinion, ought to wear their hair flat, and have restrained, pensive expressions and gestures—or else those of a stern composure.

So she gathered her tight skirts still tighter, and opened the windows as if pollution were around her, and Lilian trembled a little, fearing an unpleasant scene.

"So you are the young person my son fell in love with—ahem!—took a fancy to in Rome," said Lady Tresilian, still standing. "May I ask what mode of life you led there?" (lifting her glass) "or what was your profession abroad?"

Lilian felt that implied scorn. She realized the merciless, stinging contempt of the great lady's tones, and her eyes fell.

"I was a model," she said, nervously.

"Indeed?—a model. Ah! I thought so; and my son being a romantic young man thought fit to gather the beautiful flower so many had copied and admired."

"He loved me," said Lilian, her face turned to the light and now lit with tenderest glow.

"Of course; and you were naturally anxious to improve your position in a pecuniary way. What name may I ask?"

"I have always been called Aida."

"Dear me—Aida—is not that the name of some opera where a dark-skinned little slave cuts out a princess?"

"Very likely," she said, listlessly.

Lady Tresilian felt she had begun to blunder. What should she say to this girl who gazed at her with those clear, candid eyes?

What, also, would De Berni, clever and capable as he was in difficult situations, find to say to her by-and-bye? She seemed a being wholly without guile.

"These foreign models are so ignorant," her ladyship mused. "Poor child, perhaps she hardly knows right from wrong. I won't be unkind to her—for Rupert's sake. It is not possible she can be his wife—a nameless nobody, and I will forgive anything but that."

Yes, she will be blind to wickedness, deceit, vice itself, if only Lady Elaine Glenarm can be her daughter-in-law.

At last Lilian spoke—her pride, the Allington pride, was rising in a passionate tide in her breast.

This great lady's pitying glance of cool contempt and displeasure mingled was more than she could bear in silence. Her temples had begun to throb painfully.

"Do you not think, madam, that a slave can love?" she asked, the colour darting all over her fair face.

She thought of the dead man she had once so feared—Djalma—she remembered her piteous

appeal that he would tell her something of her past history, her name and birth, if only for the sake of him she loved, and he had been silent and left her in ignorance.

What would she now have given to be able to defy this proud woman and confess an ancestry? She felt secretly challenged to a combat.

"As a slave yes, most decidedly; but," pausing cruelly and picking her words, "not as a wife."

She even smiled graciously as she spoke, hoping that this girl, feeling convicted and guilty, would be silent, and thus tacitly admit her guilt. But no; Lilian's bent head was swiftly raised, she advanced a few steps nearer her enemy and half stretched out her hand.

"Why not as a wife, madam?"

Lady Tresilian shivered. Had she been mistaken? Was it possible that her infatuated son had positively married this model?

"Why not? Because it might ruin a man at the outset of his career, and the girl who truly loved him would, if she were noble, prefer to sacrifice her own happiness, even honour, to save him the misery and disgrace of a marriage beneath him."

Lilian breathed hard, and the small outstretched hand fell back ungrasped to her side, again that risen pride half choked her—something seemed to close in her throat.

"Disgrace—misery!" she gasped.

"You are not his wife—are you?" Lady Tresilian asked, in her turn advancing quickly, and pale now as Lilian.

"I am."

Her head sank again on her breast; she, once so used to reproaches, cruelty, and scorn, divined a furious torrent was coming.

And had she wronged and injured the man she so madly loved?

Had she disgraced Rupert? If so, then will she never cross or darken his path again. She will free him by some means or other from the hateful yoke, on her alone shall the humiliation of a hopeless love fall and the life-long pain which must be its element.

Lady Tresilian was too much enraged to think of smiling—she was horrified, agitated, petrified. An end to her schemes for the Marquis de Berni to carry out, an end to her hopes of calling Lady Elaine Glenarm daughter.

How she hated this girl in her young loveliness and innocence, standing meek but resolute before her. She could have cursed the fatal beauty that had wrought her son's destruction.

"You—a model, a low-born, ignorant creature—my Rupert's wife? And, pray, where was your home, and who were your parents, from what kennel have you sprung, and what name did you bear?"

Lilian clasped her hands and was silent, she was gathering breath in that sharp moment of agony to face her tormentor.

"I do not think I am low born," she said, quivering; "but all my life is enshrouded in mystery. I was in the care once of an Indian, called Djalma, who is now dead; he never would—perhaps he could not—tell me of my parents, but I know he hated them and he wished me to suffer through them always."

"A very pretty tale, indeed," cried Lady Tresilian, brutally. "I suppose you worked on Rupert's feelings with it, and he believed you?"

"It is the truth," said Lilian, quietly.

"Do you know what you have done?" Lady Tresilian asked, raising her voice. "You have separated mother and son for ever. I will not forgive Rupert—I never will; only idiots forgive."

Lilian covered her face and wept, but there was a movement in the room, and glancing round Lady Tresilian saw, to her intense surprise, not, as she expected, her younger son Rupert, but—Sir Herbert Tresilian.

"Bertie," cried his mother, holding out her hand, "why, how ever have you come here? Only married a month ago, and where is Clarice? Darling child, I am longing to see her."

"Clarice is all right, mother mine," he said, lifting Lady Tresilian's hand to his lips; "we are at

the Manor House together for a time, busy with deeds, settlements, parchments; our lawyer's working away, and all that. We've not had our Continental honey-moon tour yet, you know."

Lilian lifted her eyes and looked straight at Sir Herbert as if begging his pity and aid. Sir Richard's only daughter—she who should have inherited all the gold and land which he and Clarice appropriated—was standing before him with the sunlight on her hair and tears in her eyes, his brother's wife.

"And Zama, Lady Allington, what of her?" asked his mother, without regarding Lilian.

"She is in London, staying with the Rankins, and trying to get over her grief; she was fearfully cut up at poor Sir Richard's death."

No dawn of recollection was stirred in Lilian at these words. The draughts had been almost lethal in their power which Djalma had given her, they had arrested memory; but something mysteriously darted through her consciousness, a fugitive thought transitory as the lightning flash at the names, and a trance-like state of oppression overcame her.

"A nice disgrace for us, Bertie, this marriage of Rupert with a model," said Lady Tresilian, with a long sniff, glorying in wounding Lilian, "for I suppose the creature is his wife."

At these words Rupert himself entered, his dark face pale and stern. Lilian flew to him with a broken cry, and buried her face sobbing in his breast.

"Poor little heart, what is it?" he said, tenderly kissing her golden hair; "have you had a strong dose of 'caste' from yonder noble lady, my mother?"

"Yes, your mother, Rupert, of whose existence you choose to be singularly oblivious," cried Lady Tresilian, hoarsely—"you, Rupert, who might have married the Lady Elaine Glenarm."

"That miserable piece of pale insipidity, with her head aches, chloral-drinking, and æsthetic humbug? Not for me, thanks. I've no patience with such women."

"And you expect me to take a model, a nameless beggar to my arms!"—gasping for breath.

"You shall not insult my wife, for if you do you insult me. I love this girl; were she a princess, she could not be dearer to me, shrugging his shoulders, "probably not so dear."

"Keep her away from Crawley Castle then," cried her ladyship, feeling her legs nearly slipping from her in her rage and vexation. "Not one of our set shall receive her."

Rupert glanced at his brother.

"And you, Bertie, tried friend, beloved and trusty companion, my brother, will you close the door on us too?"

"No!" said Sir Herbert, lifting his head and flushing crimson, "hanged if I do, old fellow; you're welcome, you and your wife, to the Manor House whenever you like to come, and here's my hand on it."

They grasped hands in silence. Lady Tresilian, sniffing ominously, steadied her legs and crept to the door.

"Welcome at the Manor House! Do I hear aught?" she echoed, "do I live to hear my sons both defy me to my face? and you, Bertie, hand and glove with Rupert?"

"So we always were, mother mine, in the dear old days," he said, with the charming smile that seemed to carry forgiveness beforehand ere he pleaded as it flashed and played about his mouth.

"Good-morning," cried her ladyship, vindictively gathering up her skirts. "I'm sorry to say I blush for my sons. They have lost their pride."

"Kind hearts are more than coro—" began Sir Herbert, but a protracted sniff cut him short.

"Don't quote radical rubbish to me," she said, passionately rattling the handle of the door as she retreated, "your father at all events with all his faults was a gentleman."

After she was gone Rupert laid his hand affectionately on his brother's shoulder.

"A thousand thanks, dear old boy," he said.

his eyes misty with emotion as his other arm encircled Lillian; "some day perhaps I may prove my gratitude."

CHAPTER XXV.

WHAT THE NURSE SAID.

I have been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell;
I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet, keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

SIR HERBERT was as good as his word. After another disagreeable interview with the indignant dowager he went home early the next morning to the Manor House to prepare for the reception of his brother and his wife.

Clarice was sitting at the library window when she saw Sir Herbert pass along and ran out to meet him. She was in very deep mourning for Sir Richard and her face was pale and worn spite of all her efforts to appear at ease. Only this very morning had she been threatened with a visit from Dudley's mother, and believing Sir Herbert would remain another day with his brother, had agreed to meet the woman in the grove and satisfy her claim.

Clarice began to long for rest and happiness, for the glamour of that first unfortunate love wholly faded from her mind and senses as she understood how base and heartless a schemer Dudley had been. This levying on her of black mail was a foully planned scheme; it galled and wounded her feelings, it made her pass hours of bitter weeping, and terrible misgivings of coming ill struck a deadly chill into her heart.

There was also another pain in her life. Sir Herbert, while living under the same roof and sharing Sir Richard's wealth, treated her with unmistakable coldness. There had been that one passionate embrace between them on the night Sir Richard died, but after that he seemed anxious to avoid her, he shrank from her, he let her live alone.

Madly anxious to win her love, he adopted this method of daily piquing and humiliating Clarice, studying her closely, torturing her with doubts, hopes and fears, waiting in all patience for the moment when her heart should indeed be his, jealously noting every sigh and probing every thought.

"You see I've come back sooner than you expected," he said, kissing her coldly on the brow.

She walked by his side along the shrubby path in almost silence, then he saw a tear fall from her long lashes on to his hand.

"You could never come back too soon," she answered, in a low voice, her breast heaving under her heavy crape and the colour rushing over her cheek and throat.

He glanced at her, his heart throbbing. Could it be possible this young wife was learning to care for him a little and view him in another light save that of a bargain? Was she forgetting the man he was insamely jealous of—Dudley Ivors?

"The reason of my return, Clarice, was to ask you to arrange with Mrs. Steele for the reception of my brother and Rupert and his wife."

"What! is he married?" asked Clarice, surprised.

"Oh! he's married right enough, and it's upset the dowager, my mother, fearfully. I want the domestic storm to blow over and Ru to be reconciled with her, so I've invited them here for a few days."

Clarice reflected a moment.

"We had better have the Blue Room got ready. I'll speak to Mrs. Steele at once."

In half-an-hour she knew her visitor, Mrs. Ivors, might be expected.

"I think I'll have my mare saddled and ride into the village to see how they're getting on with those new cottages on the green," said Sir Herbert, looking at his watch.

He sauntered off to the stable and Clarice went in search of Mrs. Steele.

That excellent woman had never "taken to" Sir Richard's adopted daughter. All her best allegiance, regret and affection were still given

to that lost, absent Lillian of whom she still often talked.

"You wish the Blue Room got ready, my lady," the housekeeper was saying, "against to-morrow; well, well, it's a short notice, isn't it? and as we're a bit short-handed in the kitchen, and my niece Mary will only wait on you, I'll get Alice Ray to step up from her mother's to help us, the poor thing's always glad to have her dinner and earn a shilling."

"Or the gardener's daughter could help. Rosalind is out of place," said Clarice, restlessly. Half-an-hour soon goes, and that dreadful Mrs. Ivors was so very punctual.

"I can't abear the wench, she's that idle," said the housekeeper, with her air of command. Should she be put down by this Lady Tresilian, an artful, scheming thing? No, never.

"Nicely she wheedled master, I dessey," thought Mrs. Steele, "to get everything her own way and a handsome husband like Sir Herbert to make 'my lady' of her."

"Very well, have Alice if you like," said Clarice, indifferently. "I've heard she's always been half crazed since she lost that child of—of Sir Richard's."

"Come now, my lady, that ain't quite fair. Lost her? Lost our Miss Lillian? She couldn't 'elp it. She just come into the kitchen for a cup of tea that night of the theatricals, and as you know—"

"Yes, yes," said Clarice, cutting the tedious history, which she knew by heart, short, "stolen by the gipsies, I daresay, for her clothes and hair, and dead long since."

"No, don't you mistake, Miss Cla—, beg pardon, my lady, twasn't them gipsies, as I says to—Well, Polly, my girl, and where have you sprung from, looking white as your own collar too?"

This question was addressed to Mrs. Steele's niece Mary, who at that moment appeared on the scene.

"Oh, aunt, your tongue does run on so. What does my lady want to be bothered with all that for I should like to know?"

She gave a warning look at Clarice and just raised her eyebrows. Mrs. Steele caught the answering nod.

"Something's up between them two, I know it is," thought the housekeeper, "they're both bad 'uns if I don't mistake me—sly, so very sly, and I can't abear artfulness."

She bustled away in her black silk gown, and Mary put her finger warningly to her lips.

"She's a rare one to listen, my lady. Don't you trust the old cat far out of your sight, she set father and mother by the ears once through listening and repeating lies."

Then Clarice whispered:

"Has she come?"

"Yes, my lady. I've got her in my own room, so if any of the servants see or hear her I can pass her off as my relation. But, oh, my lady, be careful, I think she's been drinking deep this time."

"And Sir Herbert?" asked Clarice, trembling.

"Just ridden through the park towards the village."

"I'm a wicked, wicked woman," muttered Clarice, dismayed at the consequences of her own deeds. "Must I always be worried, tracked, and at last hunted down? I am so sure all will be found out some day."

"Ah! and so am I, my lady; she says there's talk of commuting the sentence, and then when once he's free—"

"Hush!" cried Clarice, "let us go softly to your room and get rid of one danger at a time."

Mrs. Ivors was rolled up fast asleep on Mary's bed at the Manor House. She still wore a dilapidated bonnet—as of old, part of the crown saluted the pillow, while the other was doubled up under her chin. "She had kicked her boots off, and prompted by some insane delusion that it was raining, had opened an umbrella belonging to the "Gamp" species.

"Sound asleep, my lady; don't she snore too!" whispered Mary.

"I wish she were dead," cried Clarice, looking at the puffy features of her who had introduced Dudley into the world.

Some phantom terror was painfully exciting the sleeper. Suddenly the straws of the doubled-up crown cracked and broke. Mrs. Ivors, with the groan of a Richard the Third before the battle of Bosworth Field, started up in bed.

"My boy, my darling!" she cried, half aroused from that drunken slumber, "are they going to take you before the judge and jury and then to prison? No! no! no! he shan't leave me. Here, stop, you fellow, unfasten his hands, don't you see they're white and soft like a gentleman's? My boy's a swell, begging your pardon, sir, quite the gentleman."

"She will ruin me," said Clarice, "everyone can hear this shouting, and if Sir Herbert—"
Was that the sound of a man's footsteps on the stairs? Could Sir Herbert, his suspicions aroused, have abandoned his ride and returned to watch?

Clarice threw herself on to a chair, covering her hands.

"Are we lost?" she asked, clinging to Mary. But it was not Sir Herbert, only the harmless butler, Grimson, sent up by Mrs. Steele, and told to keep his eyes open.

"What row is this?" asked Grimson, settling his black cravat, "have you got a lunatic hid away in the Manor House?"

"Quite the gentleman," here again fell from Mrs. Ivors's red lips, followed by a violent hic-cough.

"Charlie's mother will drink," said Mary, imploringly turning to the butler, "and you know how fond I am of him. Don't tell aunt, go down to your work and I'll get rid of her quietly."

She slipped half-a-crown in the wondering butler's fingers.

"Wimmen in love are generous, truly," thought Grimson, pocketing it, while another "Quite the gentleman," followed by a loud sneeze, next caught his ear as he went slowly downstairs.

"Be quiet," said Mary, trying vainly to hold Mrs. Ivors down, "you will get nothing by a noise, and you promised me when I let you in that you'd be good."

"I'm not tipsy, bless your little heart," cried Mrs. Ivors, cheerily, opening one of her blood-shot eyes. "Just dip my pocket-handkerchief into some water and lay it behind my ears—that eases me; I've only had a bad dream—I dreamt of my boy."

Clarice writhed. Her husband! Would she lose her senses one day in this awful struggle?

"It makes you cry, don't it, child?" said Mrs. Ivors, as Clarice lost all control of herself and wept. "Of course it does, but I've good news—Dudley's coming out of prison sooner than we expected. They took pity on him, he's got such sweet ways, you see. Oh! the women that loved him. The yellow-haired ballet girl's gone to Hanwell since his arrest. Heaven bless him," she said, as she kissed me, "but I can't get over it. Wasn't it pretty and nice of her?"

"You mustn't talk so loud," said Clarice, shivering.

"You know you're his wife; you've no business here at all, now have you?" asked Mrs. Ivors, opening the other eye.

"Don't goad me too far," said Clarice, coldly, "because I've a great mind to confess all and go away from everybody and earn my living in peace. I was but a child in knowledge of life when your son entrapped me. I mistook my heart. I never loved him; he only—only dazzled me for a time."

"Dazzled you, did he? So he did duchesses, my dear, but that's neither her nor there; I'm going to be quiet. Slip the money nicely into my little reticule; and how much this time, Mrs.—Mrs. Dudley Ivors?"

"A hundred pounds," said Mary, as a sudden faintness overpowered her mistress.

"A hundred pounds! Good, very good indeed, I may say most excellent. I'll leave you a long time in peace now, my dear. Your aunt Scratchell wants to have a finger in the pie, too" (giving a diabolical wink), "but that won't pay. I'm her boarder, hang out the clothes, and live on a herring—isn't it sad?"



[NOBLE HEARTS.]

She had struggled on to her feet and grasped her reticule.

"Good-bye, young ladies," she said, with an insulting grin—the victor's grin. "Let me out, Mary, my dear, by the back door, and tie up the large dog that darts along the stable yard by accident. Good-bye."

Clarice was very thankful to see the last of this unwelcome visitor, and speedily sought her own pretty bed-room.

Freedom from her hated presence was at least ensured for six months—but was it true that Dudley would be released in a few years? And then—

Moisture stood thickly on Clarice's brow. How she dreaded him—the merciless man, the treacherous lover, who had drawn her towards him with false smiles and still falser vows. What a faint, mimic pretence his love had been all the time!

The acute pain that once ruled her moods had grown dull and chronic from use.

She might have been wooed and wed in all happiness and honour by one who had awoke her deepest reverence and love—by Sir Herbert Tresilian, who had mastered and enslaved her, and brought her in reality to his feet.

"And shall we be always strangers to each other?" mused Clarice, thinking how he avoided and shunned her presence. "It almost seems as if he knew."

And she shuddered and looked apprehensively on each side of the room.

"Sooner than be driven slowly mad in this way I will confess the truth, bear the penalty of my sin and then escape," she muttered, sinking on her knees. "And come what may he will be rich, free to be happy with another, and forget miserable Clarice."

The door opened and Sir Herbert entered. Clarice threw herself into an arm-chair by the window, and he could see the turn of the slender pillar-like throat rising fair and stately above the tulle and crape of her mourning dress.

She remembered what he had told her on that

strange bridal night—that his love could never alter.

She recalled that impassioned embrace when he held her in his arms and love's rosy ecstasy had shone through every expression.

"They are positively coming to-night," he said, throwing down a telegram before Clarice. "Never saw such a fellow as Rupert, uncertain as the wind, still it will be awfully jolly to have them here."

Clarice started to her feet.

"What will Mrs. Steele say?" she cried, dreading the housekeeper's thundery words and looks. "And the Blue Room not touched?"

"Why, is it dirty—does it want repapering?" asked Sir Herbert, smiling at her discomfiture. "We've plenty of guests' chambers, and enough beds to sleep a small regiment in."

"And dinner, Herbert—will they come to dinner?"

"Don't know I'm sure. But order enough—there always is a very fair profusion I think at our table."

Clarice blushed painfully as his eyes rested on her delicate beauty, and she soon made a hurried escape to again appeal to Mrs. Steele and then dress for dinner.

Just as she entered the Blue Room, which the housekeeper had already begun to turn out, she saw a woman behind the door stare at her almost rudely.

This was Lillian's nurse, Alice Ray, who often came to assist in extra work at the Manor House.

Clarice gave her orders quietly, and then retired again to her own room, summoning Mary at this crisis.

"Dress me quickly, for they may arrive any moment—they left by the train following Sir Herbert's," she said, fastening some real roses in her black locks.

About an hour after Clarice, wearing a rich Sicilian gros-grain silk, trimmed with crape and jet ornaments, heard the noise of wheels.

She was very anxious to see Rupert Tresilian

and his young wife. She meant to be kind and friendly to them, and make them enjoy the visit.

Out of the hired fly from the Avonmore station a young girl descended alone.

It was Lillian.

Clarice ran to the hall-door to welcome her, and kissed her kindly and led her into the drawing-room.

"Why are you alone?" she asked, bewitched in spite of herself at the magic of that rare loveliness.

"My husband was detained," Lillian answered, and a strange, mysterious dimness suddenly came before her eyesight—some subtle consciousness of having in some far-off land or world or dream seen this place before—it was like the memory of a perfume and as fleeting.

"Are you tired, dear?" asked Clarice, gently, seeing that pallid glance around.

"No," said Lillian, drawing her hand over her brow. "I feel dazed, bewildered. Can I go at once to my room?"

"Certainly," said Clarice, a little chilled. "I should think the servants have finished it."

Up the stairs Lillian went alone; they seemed familiar, as well as the faces—the dear familiar faces of those portraits on the panelled walls which she had lost and found in dreams—and always that vague mist about her eyes, and the tears rising, and her breast burning like fire.

She softly opened the half-closed door of the Blue Room, her golden hair loosely tied with ribbon, and was advancing to the dressing-table, when a piercing cry and a rush of feet across the floor startled her and made her cling to the table for support.

"Miss Lily, Miss Lily! My lost—lost darling!" a woman cried, hoarsely, in mingled joy and terror, throwing herself at the girl's feet. "No, no, don't say I'm crazed. Only let me look at you and be sure. By the powers of Heaven, it is Sir Richard's lost child!"

(To be Continued.)



WITHIN A MAZE.

(A COMPLETE STORY.)

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGER.

"Jack's in love, I am sure of it. He has all the symptoms. Love has just the same effect as writing poetry, and sets the 'eye in fine frenzy rolling.' It makes a man moody too. Jack's got the complaint very bad, and there's only one cure for it—homœopathic—like cures like, you know."

As Amy Chasterney spoke thus of her brother she stirred her tea a little viciously, took a sip and looked at her mother in an inquiring way to see if she held a corresponding opinion.

Mrs. Chasterney smiled faintly but said nothing. Isabel, her eldest daughter, and the only other person in the room, had, however, a remark to make.

"That something is wrong with Jack is equally clear to me," she said; "but whether it is love or cutting a wisdom tooth I can't exactly say. Both are troublesome and trying."

"But you don't sigh and groan and tear your hair when you cut a tooth," urged Amy.

"Does Jack do that?" asked Mrs. Chasterney, quietly.

"Well, not exactly, mamma," replied Amy; "but he goes into the garden and looks at the stars when there are any in sight, and he has written a sonnet on that original subject the moon. I found it upon his dressing-table and took charge of it in case the state of his mind should ever become a subject for the Lunacy Commissioners. I should not like such a thing to fall into their hands."

"Will you never be serious, Amy?"

"Indeed I am serious, mamma, for Jack's falling in love is a very serious thing for us. It means the breaking up of our quiet home, unless we take his wife in, and that wouldn't do, you know."

"Who has caught him, do you think?" asked Isabel; "he pays no particular attention to any girl in our set."

"Not he; they pay too much attention to him," replied Amy. "Jack's good looking and got nice ways, and I don't wonder at their getting spoons upon him; but falling down at his feet and worshipping a man is not the way to catch him. That's where so many girls make a mistake. Keep them at arm's length is my motto, and they will come closer at once!"

"You treat love-making altogether too lightly," said Mrs. Chasterney, gravely; "there is nothing in the world of so much importance to a woman as the choice of a husband."

"And nothing so dismal as to have nobody to choose," said Amy. "I can't think what has come to the men lately. All we know are as timid as sheep and go together in flocks at the garden parties in a way that drives me mad. But to return to Jack. I fancy I know who's got him. It's that girl nobody knows who has settled in the village with that she Gorgon."

"Miss Renaugh she calls herself," said Isabel; "the men say she is pretty."

"Pretty?" exclaimed Amy, "so is a milliner's block with a huge wisp of tow on the top of it."

"She has beautiful hair," said Mrs. Chasterney, "and her eyes are very good."

"Hush," cried Amy, "no more of the terrible subject. Here's Jack."

The subject of their conversation came in from the garden, entering by an open French window.

The Chasterneys were dark, hence Amy's dislike to fair hair, which she labelled by calling it "tow," and Jack was the darkest of all, and he and his sisters were handsome with faces

full of expression. Their looks at times were clearer in meaning than the utterances of many people's tongues.

Jack's face now showed that he had overheard some of the conversation, and Amy braced herself for the fray.

"Why do you run with the crowd, Amy?" he said, "abusing Miss Renaugh, about whom nobody knows anything."

"I don't abuse her, Jack; I only criticise," replied Amy, "and every woman must expect that."

"When you call a woman's hair 'tow'—"

"It's a feminine phrase, Jack, that's all, and was only meant for feminine ears; but listeners do not always hear good of the people they doat upon. If you are spoons upon her, Jack, why don't you speak out like a man and a Briton?"

"I'll speak out at the proper time," replied Jack, "and I am not going to be pumped by any vocal machinery, I can tell you. You have a ten-horse power tongue, but it isn't strong enough to work my will."

"You have roses tucked away in your waistcoat, Jack!" cried Isabel, springing up; "how dare you strip our favourite Marshal Niel?"

"Cupid makes a marauder of a man. He loses his head and with it his principle when he falls in love," said Amy.

"I have two buds here," returned Jack, who had shown a tendency to sheepishness at the discovery of the hidden flowers; "the only two I have taken, while you girls have cut them by the bucketful."

"For public enjoyment and home floral decorations," said Amy. "Hiding them away is unpardonable. You have no excuse, so hand them over without delay."

"She calls a school treat public enjoyment," said Jack, appealing to the ceiling of the room; "but where, then, shall we look for our martyrs if we do not seek them among children who have to bring their own mug and spoon—stagger about in a hot sun with banners, and

finish off by being inflated with a decoction called tea and a compound believed by the faithful to be cake?"

"You may laugh at us, if you like," replied Isabel, as she was passing him on her way to the garden; "but you should remember we girls must have something to do in this place when lovers are as scarce as roses at Christmas, and unless we had the school to take up our time we should go raving mad."

"And also bear in mind," added Amy, "that idleness has been your ruin. When a young man of your inexperience and tender years steals roses from the garden of his home and hides them under his waistcoat, it is a sure sign of his going to the bad."

"All right, go it," muttered Jack; "when your tongues start they run downhill with the break off. I wish two good Samaritans with a thousand a year a-piece would come along this way and marry you out of your misery. Then, and not until then, will there be peace under this lowly roof."

The girls with mocking smiles sailed into the garden, and Jack was left with his mother, who had always a gravity upon her, and that morn- ing was more serious than usual.

She beckoned to him to take a chair by her side, and as he sat down put her arm affection- ately about his neck and kissed him.

"My darling boy," she said, "is there any truth in what the girls have been talking about?"

"A little truth and a bit of needless alarm," he replied. "I admire Violet Renaugh, but I have not formally proposed to her; nor have I any intention of marrying at present."

"You call her Violet, and that shows you have more knowledge of her than we have. You have met?"

"Several times."

"And spoken?"

"Yes."

The cloud on his mother's brow deepened and a quivering of her lip denoted the pain his answers gave her.

She loved him as only a mother can love— deeply, devotedly and unselfishly, but still she did not want to lose one who during the four- teen years which had passed since her hus- band's death had been the chief joy and sheet- anchor of her life.

Of course the time would come when he would marry, for one so handsome as he was to live a celibate life would be as Amy said a "shame and a sorrow;" but Mrs. Chasterney had looked forward to four or five years' more happiness with him ere the inevitable Jill came to take her Jack away. The Jill who appar- ently threatened to do so—Violet Renaugh— was a stranger to her—unknown to anyone and ignored by everybody.

"I should like to give you a little advice, Jack," she said, after a pause, "for I have sufficient of woman's wit to see that you are in love with this girl—or what young men at your age think is love. She has a pretty face, and in her general conduct I know of nothing against her."

"I should think not," interposed Jack. "She is the perfection of modesty and—"

"Oh, yes, my dear boy. I do not doubt it, but then you see we know nothing about her. She comes here attended only by a woman who appears to be a compound of servant and com- panion, takes a house in the village, and, with- out an introduction and unknown to any of us, lives quite alone."

"And gets talked about, of course," growled Jack; "but there never was such a place as Warndale for tittle-tattle."

"You mistake, all villages are alike; but let me recall your position. Your dear father when he died left six hundred a year for our common use until you married. Then you take half and the remainder is left for the use of the girls and myself, with the house. Three hundred will suffice for us, but what will you do with three hundred?"

"I don't depend upon that. Aunt Sophy promised to allow me three more, and when she dies I am to come into all her money."

"That is if you don't offend her in the mean- time, so that she alters her will, and I tell you frankly that I think a marriage with an un- known girl would lead to that undesirable end. You know what she thinks of birth and family."

"Precisely, my dear mother. The Chaster- neys first and creation nowhere."

"She has a right to be proud of her race, who were rich and great until they risked and lost all by their noble but unfortunate attach- ment to the last of the Stuarts. But I have more to tell you. Your aunt wrote to me from Bath yesterday, and the letter came this morn- ing while you were out for your early walk. She will be here to-night."

"Aunt Sophy here? She doesn't generally come till August, when Bath becomes an oven."

"That's true, but according to the letter it is business of importance that brings her here, and nothing less than the arranging of your marriage. She tells me she has found the very girl for you."

Jack stared at his mother in unmistakable dismay, and thrust a hand into his waistcoat, covering the two rosebuds hidden there as if they were of priceless value and he expected to lose them. He could not have been shielding his heart, for that had already gone.

His mother, who had been searching in her pocket for the letter, brought it out, and, having perused the part most interesting to him, read it aloud.

"It always gives me pleasure to come down to the Cedars, so I shall not make any fuss about coming on Jack's business. He is twenty-three, and it is time for him to marry. Men ought not to give all their best years to lawn tennis, cricket and feeble general spoon- ings. They should marry; and so I have looked him out a wife who will be all he could desire, and a great deal more than any man deserves."

"I am much obliged to her I am sure," said Jack, with a groan, "but she ought to know a man likes to choose his wife for himself, especially as he has to go through life with her, and I shall tell Aunt Sophy when she comes that three hundred a year with the woman you love is better than ten thousand with one you don't care a rush for. It's inconsistent of her to expect me to take a wife of her selecting, just as if I hadn't a heart or—or—any taste of my own. It's ridiculous, and I shall tell her so."

"But don't forget, Jack," urged Mrs. Chasterney, quietly, "what offending her will lead to."

"No, I don't forget, nor what her absurd ideas might do for me. I won't marry a girl I don't love, and as I feel a little indignant I will, with your permission, my dear mother, go out for a walk and work off a little of the superfluous steam before she arrives, or I may explode, as the Yankees say, right away."

CHAPTER II.

LOVE ME, LOVE ME EVER.

In a very dissatisfied state of mind Jack Chasterney left the Cedars, and having "dodged" his sisters, who in cheerful malice designed keeping him by their side all the morning, he passed down the village and turned into a lane at the bottom, a favourite haunt for rustic lovers in the evening, having the somewhat singular but very appropriate title of "Always True Walk."

The freshness of a fine June morning lay upon the hedges, and the ground in shaded parts yet held the dew of the night, lying in the untold millions of tiny drops, every one of which philo- sophers confidently assert plays the part of a mirror and reflects the whole of creation above it.

Without troubling his mind about philosophers or their certainties, and regardless of the dew which he scattered about with his feet, Jack, in a state of mind bordering on despair, that is, lover's despair, hurried down the lane until he came to a stile where a matronly-looking woman was either resting or waiting for somebody. It

soon appeared from her looks and movements that she had been waiting for Jack.

She was a woman of fifty, too thick-set and solid in frame to have ever been suspected of tight-lacing, and her face, hard and brown with a grim expression of mingled defiance, indiffer- ence and disdain, was a shield against any impertinent inquiries as to why she was there and an effectual bar to casual conversation of any description whatsoever.

As Jack approached she rose from the step on which she had been sitting and came towards him. He looked at her and beyond her, as if surprised to find she was alone, and she readily answered the look.

"I would not let Miss Violet come this morn- ing," she said, "for I think it is time for secret fooling to come to an end."

"It has come to an end," replied Jack, in no way surprised at her abrupt manner, "although I can't take any credit for it. My people have found me out."

"And what do they say, young gentleman?" "Well, you see, Mrs. Rogers, they don't say much, and I don't think it matters much; what interests me is what they think."

"And what do they think?" "If you will excuse me I would rather break that to Violet and—and lay my plans before her."

But Mrs. Rogers shook her head and most emphatically dissented from his doing anything of the sort.

"I know all about your plans," she said— "marry at once and live at variance with your friends on nothing a year."

"Nothing? I've three hundred."

"And to take it you will have to upset your home. No. I think you had better go back and think no more about Miss Violet, and I'll take her away. No doubt in time she'll forget you."

Against Jack stared at her. It wanted but this to complete the work begun by the letter from his Aunt Sophy. Go back and forget her. Impossible, for had not he and Violet said all sorts of pretty things to each other, and did they not love as man and woman never loved before? Was not the bond between them too strong ever to be broken?

So he thought and believed, as we all think when we love. The opening of the portals of our heart lets in what we deem to be an imperishable image and we put it on a shrine, there to stand never to be defaced or cast down. A pretty dream, and worth living for. What a pity it is so many of us awake so soon.

But after all there is such a thing as lasting love. The vows of youth are often sanctified by the affection of old age, and the grave often holds all the mortal remains of a pair whose souls are linked together through all eternity. It is pos- sible the lives of Jack and Violet might be of this nature and we must not laugh at his faith.

"You talk as if I were a machine, Mrs. Rogers," he said. "Go home and not think of Violet! What a poor and pitiful idea you must have of my love. Does she know the errand you have come upon?"

"No, she doesn't, for if I had told her I should not be here. She's as bad as you and perhaps a little worse. Oh, there's a pair of you, and it was wrong of me not to stop it when it first began."

"I must see Violet again and at once," said Jack, after a little reflection, "it is no use your trying to separate us unless we consent to it."

"I shall not leave you together again," said Mrs. Rogers, grimly.

"That you can do as you like about," replied Jack, "I have nothing to conceal, only I must see Violet."

"Come then," said the matron, "you shall see her. I meant to have stopped the whole thing, but both of you have got a way of getting over me that I can't understand."

"You've such a tender heart, Mrs. Rogers."

"A tender heart. I've not had that these thirty years. I loved a man then—as handsome, although not so well bred as you are, young sir, and we were married. I had a little money, but I did not know he married me for that—perhaps

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he didn't, but, anyhow, when the money was gone he went too—across the sea they told me, and I've never seen nor heard from him since. So don't talk to me of heart, and don't ask me to believe in love."

"I am very sorry for you," said Jack, gently, as they moved off—the woman in front with her usually hard face strangely softened, and tears rolling down her sun-burnt cheeks, but her emotion soon subsided and ere long she had put on her accustomed look of hard indifference.

Their way lay to the bottom of the lane where a cottage stood surrounded by fruit trees and covered with flowers.

A pretty place that might have been built especially for Cupid to reside in.

In front was a charming portion of garden rich with luxuriant groups of scented flowers, but in their midst was a flower dearer than all others to Jack Chasterney—Violet Rennaugh.

Of petite yet full and well-rounded figure, with a pleasing, soft face, with large eyes of melting tenderness, she looked what she was—a lovable creature, a pretty idol for a man to worship, and Jack approached her undoubtedly adoring.

The soft turf outside deadened the footsteps of himself and guide, and it was not until Mrs. Rogers touched the latch of the gate that Violet became aware of his arrival.

The colour darkened in her cheeks, but there was no affectation or hesitation as he drew near. Her little hands were extended to him, and her bright, trustful eyes looked up into his as she called him "Dear Jack," and said she was glad he had come.

He stooped down and their lips met—the stern, relentless Mrs. Rogers looking another way and walking off from them in an abstracted state of mind. She must have forgotten her insisting upon being present at the interview.

Very likely she was thinking of her past. It was not all gloom, and she always preferred thinking of the short bright days when she thought her husband loved her, rather than the long, dark night that followed his desertion. Gorgon though she might be in the eyes of those who knew her not, the hard-featured woman had a heart as soft as any woman owned.

"I am glad to see you, Jack," said Violet, as they sat down upon a rustic seat under the shade of the cottage porch. "Mrs. Rogers said she thought you were not coming."

"She tried to keep me away," replied Jack, "talking some rubbish about our being separated and it being wiser not to see each other again—as if anything or anybody could part us."

"I dare not think of it, Jack," said Violet, with a little shudder that asked for and gained a protecting arm around her slim waist; "but I often think our love will soon come to an end. The people here are very cruel to me—they do not come to see me, and they stare when we meet as if I had done them some great injury."

"I suppose my sisters are as bad as anybody?" asked Jack, a little bitterly.

"Quite as bad," said Violet, with a solemn shake of the head; "but I don't mind them so much, because they are your sisters. The others almost frighten me."

"Now what a thing a social barrier is," said Jack. "I assure you, Violet, that better and kinder people than those round here don't exist; and my sisters are as good as gold, and sensible, clever girls into the bargain, but because you are quite a stranger and your name is not in the Red Book they put on the hideous garb of disdain, which doesn't fit or become them in any way. It isn't their real self, you see, Violet—on my word it isn't."

"I am glad of that, Jack," was Violet's answer. "I have thought they knew all about our secret meetings, which I suppose are not quite right in the eyes of people."

"Oh, bother people, Violet. If we worry about what they say we shall always be miserable. But I have something to say to you about a letter my aunt has written—I've not told you about her, I believe—as there is something concerning us in it."

And then he told her what had transpired that morning, or as much of it as he thought he ought to tell her, making as light as he could of the gathering cloud of troubles, but Violet listened very gravely, and fully recognised the serious side of it.

"What is your aunt, Jack?" she asked. "And where does she live?"

"She's an old maid, and she hangs out in Somersetshire," he said, "and the reason she comes bungling my affairs is that she has some money she intends leaving me, and on the strength of that she fancies she can do what she likes with me."

"But if you don't have the wife she has chosen for you where will the money go?"

"To Malta, Gibraltar, East or West Indies, or anywhere else she pleases," he replied, "and now I must tell you why I've spoken about her—Violet, we must be married."

"Oh! Jack!"

"Yes, I've made up my mind, for I see if we daily with the question they will separate us. They mean well, as I deem a lot of kittens do when they go in for arranging a basket of wool, but they will make a muddle of it."

"But I told you, Jack, that I did not want to be married," said Violet, with her face so near to his that a little interruption was imperative.

When Jack had fully taken advantage of the proximity of her charming little mouth, she went on.

"No, Jack, not to be married, for I cannot imagine myself happier than I am now, and I'm afraid of any change, as it cannot be for the better."

"Violet," said Jack, with the air of a wise senior, "you are a pretty, dear little goose, and know nothing of the world. Love-making, when it is honest like mine, is only the forerunner of the married state, and the married state is natural. It is not good for man to live alone, et cetera, you know."

"But I live alone—not you, Jack—you have your mother and sisters, while I have not a relative in the world."

"All the more need for my protection, darling, and I cannot give it to you fully unless you are my wife. I can have three hundred a-year, but I shall only take two, and we can live on that easily—so you must say yes, Violet."

But Violet held back and looked like one in considerable doubt, and her beautiful eyes lost their lustre as she sat with her hands clasped before her, thinking.

Jack held her close to him, and by a gradual tightening of his arm around her waist endeavoured to strengthen his cause and to convince her of the wisdom and necessity of an immediate union.

"Well, Violet, dearest, what do you say?"

"I must have a little time to think, Jack," she said, "for there is one whom I must consult—my guardian, who has been very kind to me."

"I never knew you had a guardian," said Jack, a little irritated; "but, of course, you will put an obstacle in my way if you can. That's just like you women. You may hate each other to everlasting, but as soon as a man comes on the board you link yourself together, even at the risk of your own happiness, against him. Eve fought single handed and floored Adam. What chance has a fellow like me if you are bent upon making me miserable?"

"Don't talk in that way, Jack—please don't," pleaded Violet, her eyes swimming with tears, "for I love you more than all the world, but I promised not to marry without my guardian's consent."

"There again," he said. "How like a woman. You promised not to marry, but you get engaged simply because that was not in the agreement. It pleases you to get engaged because I suppose it is amusing; but there you stop. It is enough to drive a man mad."

Jack was in a very bad way, being very much in love, and spoke as lovers do when they find barriers put in their road. Violet was beginning to think he was cruel to her, and a first quarrel was imminent, when the footsteps of Mrs. Rogers was heard on the gravel walk.

"Give me until to-morrow, dearest," whispered

Violet. "You have asked me so suddenly, and I must have a little time to think."

"Very well, darling," he said, and having taken a rapid advantage of Violet being so near again, he withdrew his arm, and prepared himself to meet Mrs. Rogers with the face of a casual visitor who had been discussing the Britisher's darling theme, the weather.

Mrs. Rogers was in the hardest mood, and when she came into view spoke in a cold, caustic way, as if love in herself and others was a thing to be trodden upon and kept underfoot.

"You have stayed a long time, Mr. Chasterney," she said, "and, Miss Violet, the fowls want their food. Looking after your chickens is better than making a fool of yourself."

"But I assure you, Mrs. Rogers—" Jack began.

She interrupted him in a moment.

"You can answer me anything you like," she said, "but it won't make any difference. The fowls must be looked to by somebody, and I can't do everything, and you ought to be on your way home."

Knowing her pretty well by this time, Jack saw the danger lights were up, and proceeded to get out of the way before he was run into. A kiss and hurried whisper in Violet's ear to remember he wanted an answer on the morrow, and a shake of the hand from Mrs. Rogers, and he was on his way back to the Cedars in a state of mind in which it would be difficult to say whether doubt or satisfaction predominated.

He had no doubt about Violet, and he had a pretty keen idea of being able to bring Mrs. Rogers to his way of thinking, but there was that guardian, an unexpected thorn in his path, and of a nature he particularly disliked. There was a guardian or trustee to his father's property—he always looked upon the two offices as one and the same—who came down to the Cedars once a year to give an account of the property they held, and to hand over the interest accruing from it: a crusty, crabby old man, given to asking Jack impertinent questions, and talking to him by the hour together of the evils resulting from the indulgence in tobacco and the consumption of alcoholic liquors, particularly at your own expense.

It is not too much to say that Jack hated this individual with his whole heart, and having had no experience of any other form of trusteeship concluded that Violet must have something similar.

"That guardian will spoil the business, if nothing else will," he muttered, as he reached the gate of his home. "What a bother it is that people always have other people to upset their plans and make their lives a round of bitterness."

Musing in this unsatisfactory fashion, he crossed the garden and entered the house. In the hall he came across Amy giving directions to the servants about a pile of luggage near the stairs, in which rugs, bonnet-boxes, and two or three bird-cages (one with a fiercely whiskered cat in it) predominated.

"Aunt Sophie's come," said Amy, with a sly triumph in her eye, "and has been inquiring after you. I think you ought to see her at once."

"You have no right to think about it at all," replied Jack, as gruff as it was in his nature to be. "I think that I won't see her until I'm obliged to, and that will be at luncheon. That box is too heavy for the girl. I'll take it up to the landing." And hoisting Aunt Sophie's principal trunk upon his broad shoulders, he went upstairs grunting and grumbling about what he considered to be the true plagues of modern society, aunts and guardians.

CHAPTER III.

A DECIDED AUNT.

MRS. SOPHIA CHASTERNEY was a lady who very reasonably might have been enrolled among the "Women of Mark," for her name, as well as her fame, was widespread through the shires

of Somerset, Berks, and Wilts. To shoddy gentry and would-be great little men and women she was a terror, and it was useless for them to hint in her presence that they were connected with noble families in the east, or north, or south, as she had the pedigree of every great family in England at her fingers' ends, and with two pungent questions could floor the most audacious impostor.

The three shires mentioned having their full share of great little people, Miss Chasterney had, then, a long roll of enemies, who said hard things of her, and put about stories of her going about after dark in male attire, smoking a short pipe, and halting at wayside inns for sundry drinks; and that she smoked cheroots, and a churchwarden at home, was regarded as among the few undisputed facts of the present century. Boys, even errand boys, trembled before her, and there was not a single railway porter on the portion of the line she frequented who did not fly, at the sound of her voice, to do her bidding, and afterwards take his unlawful tip in fear and trembling.

For all that Miss Chasterney was a woman to admire. She must have been a beauty in her youth, and was handsome still, with a good figure and a way of moving which showed that the grace of early life had not entirely deserted her. It was her look, cold, clear, and piercing as a rapier, that made others bow before her. Tradesmen with whom she had business called her in private "The Gimlet," and enemies of her own rank openly spoke of her as "The Rattlesnake."

It was this lady who had come to settle Jack in life, and what she undertook to settle was, in general, as good as done. But she seemed in no hurry about it.

When Jack came down to luncheon he found her sitting by the window very stiff and upright, but very gracious withal.

"My dear nephew, you are looking well," she said, and gave him a kiss on either cheek.

They were alone for awhile, and Jack expected to hear something about his bride appointed, but no allusion was made to her. Isabel, Amy, and Mrs. Chasterney all appeared in turn, and the conversation turned upon general topics; only once were they on dangerous ground.

"Well, girls," said Miss Chasterney, suddenly, "have you got sweethearts yet?"

"Sweethearts!" exclaimed Amy, "how can you ask such a thing in this land of geese? Warndale is the home of bashful boobies. I do wish, aunty, you would take us back with you to Bath, and give us a chance."

"We will talk about that by-and-bye," said Miss Chasterney. "So the men are muffs, are they? And what are the girls, pray? Are there any pretty ones about, except yourselves, to speak of?"

"Not one," replied they, "unless we cast a—"

Here she caught Isabel's eye, and pulled up sharp. Jack was fiery red, and his mother in a state of trepidation. Miss Chasterney, apparently heedless of dangerous ground having been touched upon, asked for a little more pie, then changed the subject by asking how the school was going on.

She was known in that school through her annual visits, which were looked forward to by the scholars with a terror inexpressible. She put such questions to the children, and was down upon them so sharp when they were wrong, that all the sweetness was taken out of the sugar-plums she gave them at the finish.

Amy and Isabel had much to tell, and, to Jack's great relief, nothing but the school was talked of during the rest of the luncheon.

Afterwards they all went into the garden, and Jack was desired to smoke a cigar—his aunt liking the fumes thereof. It was suspected by many that she was equal to a cheroot herself, and there was no denying that she smoked cigarettes at night, for a "bronchial affection" she said, which was all humbug—but people must have some excuse for their little weaknesses.

It was not until late in the afternoon that the dreaded moment arrived. Jack had tried his

best to get away, and his aunt would not let him go; but when his mother and sisters went away no effort was made to detain them. Alone at last they were together, and Jack braced himself up for the struggle.

"Well, Jack," said Mrs. Chasterney, pouncing upon him, "have you nothing to say to me?"

"I'll say anything you like, aunty," he said.

"What shall we talk about?"

"Don't you be a humbug," said the old maid; "leave that to women who can't run the risk of being misunderstood and scandalized. A man can always be honest if he likes, and ought to be, especially about small matters. You saw the letter I wrote?"

"Yes, aunty."

"Then why don't you talk about it? Tell me how glad you are and how rejoiced you feel at the prospect of having a wife, with my blessing and a nice little allowance."

"Oh, of course I am delighted," said Jack, looking as miserable as a miser robbed of his gold, "and I have no doubt you have chosen well for me—you always choose well; but, ah!—don't you think, if I waited a little—"

"Humbug again," interposed Miss Chasterney.

"I can see through you, Jack, with one eye closed. You don't know who the girl is, and you want to refuse her. That is not like a man at all, unless he happens to be spoons in another direction, as I believe you are."

"I admire somebody very much, aunty—"

"Of course you do; and why did you not say so at first, instead of talking about waiting? Well, you may admire what you like, but you are going to marry the girl I have chosen, I can tell you."

"I can't do that," suddenly taken possession of by a wicked and rebellious spirit.

"What's that?" asked his aunt, with an abnormal stiffening of the back. "You dare to tell me you won't marry the girl I have selected?"

"Wh—why should I? It isn't fair, aunty, for you to come upon a fellow like this. I love a girl that I mean to marry, if I marry at all."

"I'll cut you out of my will if you disobey me."

"What's money to love?"

"What's love without money, you six feet of spoony manhood?" asked Miss Chasterney; "but I know all about it: it's a case of moon and spoon, wife and life, and all the rest of the jingling stuff you buy in valentines. I thought you were wiser than others—more of a Chasterney."

"But you loved once, aunty. I've heard—"

"Jack," said the old maid, turning ghastly pale, but still speaking calmly, "you mind your own business, and don't take up an old woman's past, particularly when you can't be sure what you may turn out for fools to look at. I say you can't live on love, and I don't mean you to try it. You are to marry the girl I have chosen. She will be here to-morrow night."

"Here?" explained Jack, with the look of a lion in fast-increasing toils.

"Yes, here; and if you say 'No!' to her, then say good-bye to your aunt for ever."

The last few words rattled out like musketry fire, and, gathering up her skirts, Miss Chasterney sailed away, and left miserable Jack to his meditations.

"Confound all meddling old women," he muttered, as he threw himself down into the garden seat; "but I am not going to be over-ridden by any of them. A pound a week with Violet—"

"A letter, sir, brought by a party by hand, sir," broke in the voice of Banks, groom and gardener to the Cedars, "which I was a brushing up the front gravel-walk when she comes up and says it was to be given to no one but you."

"Thank you, Banks; you needn't wait," said Jack, as he recognized the writing of Violet with a considerable rise in the temperature of his cheeks. He did not want everybody to be a spectator of the emotions which probably might arise from the perusal of that precious epistle.

Banks saluted and went back to his work, struggling manfully to keep down a grin. He

had a little affair of a tender nature on hand himself with the daughter of a thriving pig dealer, which had wonderfully strengthened his discerning powers, and he knew which way the wind blew.

"MY DEAREST JACK,—I have been thinking over what you told me this morning, and I feel it would be very wrong of me to marry you without the consent of your friends. I love you far too much, darling, to injure your prospects in life, which I am sure would be marred if you did anything to offend your rich aunt. I write at once, instead of to-morrow, to get over the pain it gives me. Oh, my darling, my darling, I love you so; but you must not come here any more.—Your ever fond and loving VIOLET."

Jack read it through twice, and was both angry and pained.

The idea that she did not love him so much as she had pretended to thrust itself forward in his mind, but he put it away. He knew she loved him—there were a thousand tender words and looks of the past vividly before him to prove it. The evidence of the truest and deepest love lay in the letter too.

"But I'll not let her spoil the happiness of us both by making a needless sacrifice," he muttered, as he paced up and down. "Live without Violet? exist without my bright-eyed, golden-haired darling? Impossible! I'll go down at once to her."

So down he went to the little cottage at the bottom of the lane, where he was undoubtedly expected and preparations were made to receive him.

Mrs. Rogers, stern and immovable as a Roman sentry, barred his way.

"You can't come in here, Mr. Chasterney," she said. "Miss Violet has been crying all the afternoon, and is now asleep. You've got the letter, and there's an end of it."

"But it is a foolish, inconsistent letter," he urged; "and you must know it. I cannot part from her."

"Duty before everything," said the woman, with compressed lips. "Beat your love down and keep it under, and you won't be sorry for it one day."

"You can talk like that at your time of life," replied Jack, bitterly; "but at my age the heart is warmer and cannot be made to stifle its promptings so easily."

"A true heart is never cold," was the answer. "Age only gives us the strength to guide it aright. No, Mr. Chasterney, you can't come in. I stand here to guard my pretty bird, and I'll do it, with my life if need be."

He was foiled, and went back to the Cedars more perturbed than ever. Everything and everybody was against him, and his life was very dark indeed.

Men have laughed at love, but from it spring the greater joys and deeper bitterness of our lives. When it comes to rule all else bows before it.

Jack kept out of the way of his people until the dinner was on the table, then he showed himself in the drawing room, gave his aunt his arm and led her in.

Both were very stiff and dignified, and Mrs. Chasterney looked with dismay upon the breach between them.

Conversation was impossible.

Amy and Isabel laboured nobly to keep something cheerful going, but they were not supported.

Jack could not talk, his aunt would not, and Mrs. Chasterney was in a state bordering on a display of tears, and nobody made a hearty meal.

Jack took two extra glasses of wine, which frightened his mother, and made her think of the lectures her trustee was wont to deliver on the growing power of drink.

That trustee, by the way, once illustrated his teaching at the Cedars by going into the drawing-room after dinner in a speechless state, so that he could only enforce a moral lesson by gasping like a fish and weeping copiously.

The ladies departed, and Mrs. Chasterney as she was leaving stopped Jack and whispered:

"Don't drink any more wine, my dear boy."

He nodded, and when he was alone threw up the window and lit a cigar.

The narcotic weed did its duty and soothed him a little, but he felt it would be a mockery to join the others, so he saw them no more that night.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS CHASTERNEY VICTORIOUS.

THAT "Faint heart never yet won a fair lady" has long been accepted as a truism, and bearing it in mind, Jack was up in the morning early and away to Violet's cottage with the hope of seeing her.

It was much too early for him to think of calling, but he conceived it just possible that she might be in the garden among her favourites, the flowers, and if she were the opportunity he sought would be gained.

But there was no Violet in sight.

The blinds were down and the gate was locked, so with disappointment for a companion he wandered to and fro for awhile, but finding no signs of moving he at length retired home.

Breakfast was ready and they were waiting for him.

A stiff, constrained salute passed between him and his aunt, but his mother looked as quietly happy as usual, and his sisters were in high spirits. Amy was positively laughing.

This he took very ill. Nobody had a right to laugh just then, for, of course, they were laughing at him, and he went through his breakfast, polite to everybody, but snorting defiance occasionally at his merry sisters.

"I suppose, John," said Miss Chasterney, "that you are too busy to-day to take me for a drive."

She had never called him "John" but once before, and that was when he was a boy and in the exuberant spirits natural to him played some prank with her parrot, which reduced that amiable bird to a state equivalent to intoxication.

Tobacco was supposed to be the main instrument used for the humiliation of her pet, an opinion strengthened by the fact of Jack's being in a state common to those who have indulged in a first pipe. She called him John then, and she called him John now, so everything lent reason to believe she was deeply offended.

"No," he said, gloomily, "I have nothing to do, and I shall be very pleased."

Breakfast over, he ordered Banks to bring the pony carriage round, and his aunt being ready, he handed her in, Amy and Isabel looking on in a state of most unseemly merriment that was trying to Jack, who, between disappointed love, coercion and family ridicule, was in a state bordering on frenzy.

When they were clear of the village Miss Chasterney returned to the distasteful subject, speaking even more emphatically than she had done upon the first occasion.

"I shall expect you, Jack," she said, "to meet the lady who is coming to-night as a matter of courtesy to her and me."

"Does she know the object of her coming?" asked Jack.

"By this time—yes."

"A nice woman she must be, coming hunting up a fellow when she must know he doesn't want her."

"She comes in obedience to my wishes. Left to herself she would probably have stayed away. I am fortunate in finding obedience somewhere."

"I would obey you if I could, aunty—really I would—but it's not the way I looked to get a wife, and I can't agree to it. It's a miserable business for me, for I've offended you and lost the girl I wanted. Here's her letter; you may read it if you like."

Miss Chasterney read it through with an immovable face, carefully folding and replacing it in the envelope.

"A sensible girl that," she said; "she is the stronger of the two."

"A woman can throw a man over and it's all right," said Jack, bitterly, "but if a man deceives a woman hanging is too good for him. You give her credit for it."

"She acts as your best friend."

"I don't see that, when she knows that no other will make me happy."

"How does she know that?"

"Oh, I've told her so."

"Wondrous confidence," exclaimed Mrs. Chasterney; "and so you think this girl could never doubt you. Poor boy."

"It's no good your trying to set me against her. She is truth itself and would not doubt me," said Jack, as he touched the pony with the whip.

Increased pace made conversation difficult, and for awhile they talked no more; when they spoke again it was of other things.

Before they had been out much longer Miss Chasterney discovered she wanted a few things from Grimley, a small town near, and as they were out proposed going on.

"We can get some luncheon at the inn," she said, "they always have ham and eggs if nothing else."

In a frame of mind tending to the acceptance of any arrangement, Jack acquiesced, just as he would have done if his aunt had proposed an excursion to Salt Lake City.

It mattered to him little where he went or what he did.

Everything had gone wrong with him and he was both angry and miserable.

Once in the town and among the shops Miss Chasterney was in Happy Land, and bidding Jack go away and play billiards or do something to amuse himself for a few hours, she went in for overhauling the "new season's goods," and "latest styles" with a relish unknown to man in any of his varied pursuits.

The joy appertaining to shopping is a special boon and blessing bestowed upon the fair sex.

Jack went to the billiard-room of the "Bear," and as it was not market day found the marker spending the time, according to his custom, by sleeping in a corner near the cue-rack.

Rousing this young gentleman he proposed to play, and in course of time was handsomely beaten.

By the time he had lost five shillings luncheon was ready, and a waiter came to say Miss Chasterney was waiting for him.

After luncheon there was more shopping with more billiards until nearly five o'clock, when Miss Chasterney, leaving the draper in a state verging on prostration of mind and body but satisfied withal, announced herself as ready to return.

So back they went to The Cedars, and sought their respective rooms to dress for dinner.

"I feel my mind going a little," muttered Jack, as he spoiled his second tie in endeavouring to make a bow; "and unless I stand firm that aunt of mine will be victorious. What a woman she is! Oh, confound it! I'm not going to use another tie—this must do."

It was a mere wisp of a bow he tied at last, very unlike the one he usually tied when going out or receiving visitors at home, and at any other time he would have been disgusted with it. Now he thought it was good enough for the occasion.

A knock at the door and the voice of Amy aroused him from a troubled soliloquy. He asked her what she wanted.

"Only to have a little talk with you, Jack," she replied. "I'm going into the library."

"I'll come in a minute," grunted Jack; "but I can pretty well guess what you want, and if you pull the reins too tight you may catch it."

Amy was dressed and looking very grave when he joined her. A book of prints had occupied a little of her time while waiting for her brother. Now she closed it.

"I hope you will forgive me," she said, "but I want to know what you are going to do."

"Do?" he said. "Why nothing more than be civil to-night and run away to-morrow. Aunt Sophy may keep her money and go to—to Bath."

"She lives there, Jack."

"Well, to the other Bath people are always talking about, wherever it is. It's another name for Jericho, I think."

"So you've made up your mind to have nothing to do with aunty's choice?"

"Of course I have."

"I say, Jack," said Amy, taking his arm and resting her cheek upon it, "are you very much in love with this Miss Renaugh?"

"I am, indeed, Amy—I can't live without her."

"And it's very nice to be in love—isn't it?"

"Yes, if other people wouldn't come interfering—but no good ever comes of it."

Amy sighed.

"I think," she said, "I know what I should do were I in your place."

"What's that?"

"Run away with her."

"No, Amy, that I can't do at present, because Violet is as dead against me as anybody. She says she won't have me without the consent of my friends."

"A girl who says that and means it is a muff," said Amy, contemptuously. "You didn't take that as a settling of the question?"

"Well, I did rather."

"Oh! Jack, dear Jack, what a weak vessel you are, after all. Don't give her up, but stand to your guns and I prophesy you will get her after all."

"But I thought you hated her, Amy? Only the other day you were pitching into her like anything."

"Yes, I know, Jack; but that was because I felt the prospect of your loss, but now that I find you can't be happy without her I know it must be, you see."

"I don't quite see, Amy."

"Never mind if you don't. We must go downstairs. The young woman picked out for you has arrived, and is thirsting to see her future husband."

"Oh, confound her!"

"Jack—Jack, how can you be so cruel?"

"Cruel—when I'm regularly hunted up by that impudent woman who knows what she is here for, and—"

"Come along," said Amy, leading him out of the room. "I cannot listen to you. I daresay the poor creature has heard what a handsome fellow you are and cannot keep away. Now brace yourself up. Are you ready? Here we are."

With a face to which no pen or pencil could do justice, Jack marched into the drawing-room prepared to make himself as disagreeable as he could in a gentlemanly way.

His aunt, mother, and Isabel were there with a young lady whose back was turned towards him.

"Jack," said Miss Chasterney, rising with a triumphant glance upon her countenance, "permit me to introduce you to your intended wife."

An exclamation of annoyance at their way of fixing him rose upon his lips, but it died away as the young visitor turned round and disclosed the face of Violet Renaugh!

"I sent her here, Jack," said the victorious old maid, when the first excitement of joyful surprise was over, "to catch you, and she has done so. But the poor little goose knew nothing of my schemes, and I hoped it would come about another way."

"We were all so unkind to her," said Amy, stroking Violet's hair; "but we did not know what to do. Old Lady Dankyster, who represents Mrs. Grundy here, would not call upon her, and we dare not do so for fear of being cut by everybody."

"I enjoyed my life very much," Violet said, with a quiet look at Jack that had no end of meaning in it, "and I do not regret being left so much alone."

"She had one faithful friend," said Miss Chasterney, "Anne Rogers, who was her mother's favourite servant."

"She kept me in order," laughed Jack, making a grimace. "But what a shame it was for you all to know what was coming, and to keep me in such a state of misery and suspense."

"Nobody knew but me," replied his aunt, "and I only punished you because you were so uppish. And yet I admired your courage, and you gave me proof of your love by the way you were prepared to sacrifice everything for Violet."

"Sacrifice!" said Jack. "Where's the sacrifice? Giving up a little dress for the rarest jewel."

"If you call my money dress I'll leave it to a hospital," returned Miss Chasterney.

"Don't do that, aunty," said Jack, demurely—"leave it to Violet. Amy was in your secret this afternoon, wasn't she?"

"All day," said Amy. "Aunty wanted a confederate, and she knew I could be trusted. But I am to have my reward; I am going to Brighton, and see if I don't bring back a husband."

"How lightly you girls talk," said the old maid. "But I suppose it is as well to make the most of your sunshine; old age, and sorrow, and care will come soon enough. Jack, give me your arm; you must be attentive to me while I am here. You will have enough of Violet by-and-bye."

"Never!" he whispered in Violet's ear, as he rose to obey the command of his aunt.

Later in the evening, when dinner was over, they were all together in the drawing-room again. Violet—between Isabel and Amy, and Miss Chasterney in front—has been telling them how she first met Jack in the fields, and their first acquaintance being due to the wind having blown her hat off. Jack ran after it, and they walked a little way together, with Mrs. Rogers behind. The "Gorgon" must have known why they were there, or she never would have permitted that and the many meetings which followed.

Jack and his mother sat a little apart, and they were talking in low tones. She wanted to know how it was they had never heard of Violet before she came to the village.

"I think I know," Mrs. Chasterney said. "Your Aunt Sophy was in love with a man many years ago, and he paid her a deal of attention, but he was a man of the world, and he left her for a richer woman. He spent all her money, and died early, leaving a child and a wife behind him. The wife soon followed him, and your aunt took charge of the child, keeping her quietly to herself. The man was of foreign extraction, although a naturalised Englishman, and his name was Renuagh."

"All is clear now," said Jack. "Poor Aunt Sophy, she hides a lot under that calm face. What a beautiful night! the moon is at the full, and I always think we have a special moon at The Cedars. I must get Violet to go out and look at it."

A minute later and this happy pair are without, leaving people almost as happy as themselves within.

"Violet, darling, we ought to be very thankful when we think of the sorrows and disappointments of others."

"Yes, dear Jack," she answers, "and you will be so true to me, won't you?"

He replies with his lips—with a single sound so soft that it is barely heard in the silence of this summer night, and with more than early joy in their hearts they stridden on together.

R. H. B.

CECIL'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER XXX.

RETRIBUTION.

MRS. PRATT, the wife of the rich farmer who had made the acquaintance of Miss Pomfret within the last few months, was a good and worthy person, much given to romantic specula-

tions and with a morbid tone of wonder developed largely in her mental organization. The idea of being on intimate sisterly terms with an actual countess nearly took away her breath. She had visited the Pomfret family, who now went by the name of Ormond in their furnished house in Union Street, and now Miss Pomfret was visiting her at her farmhouse in the picturesque county of Surrey. They had called in at the country inn to take tea, when the entrance of Cecil Renfrew nearly drove Miss Cecilia wild with excitement. What the reason was that she lost her head in the extraordinary manner we have described does not appear just at present.

Meanwhile the entrance of several strangers all with pale excited faces roused the notice even of Cecil Renfrew, who was thinking so deeply of other things.

"What in the world is the matter?" cried Mrs. Pratt, addressing a pale gentleman.

The pale gentleman took off his hat, put it on the table and wiped his brow in some tremor.

"Do let us have some brandy," he said. "While there is life there is hope."

"Hope of what?" asked Cecil Renfrew, and the lips of Cecilia Pomfret trembled.

"What an idiot I am to be sure," she said. "I had such a horrible dream last night. However, that does not matter."

"There is a fearful accident down by the tunnel," said the pale gentleman: "a railway collision—the place is strewn with mangled bodies; we have escaped, but there are several so fearfully injured that it would have been a mercy if they had been killed."

Cecil Renfrew was noble at heart, his one bitter disappointment had, as it were, made him deaf and blind to the pleasures of the world, but it had not by any means hardened him against suffering humanity.

He started to his feet in an instant. "Let us go and help them," he said.

Those who had escaped from the fearful accident unhurt drank a little brandy with which the good people at the inn provided them, and then a party set out with a cart at the bottom of which was laid soft clean straw. The little inn and its outbuildings, was to become an impromptu hospital for the sick and dying.

The next morning the newspapers were filled with an account of the most terrible catastrophe that ever disgraced the annals of railway traffic: carnage, mutilation, death in its most shocking forms—death dealt out wholesale to the pure, the innocent and noble, the young, the old, the middle aged, saints and sinners alike.

We will not dwell upon these painful details, we are mainly concerned only with two among the sufferers.

It may, perhaps, surprise the reader to learn that Cecilia Pomfret insisted upon accompanying Cecil Renfrew to the scene of death and suffering. She was not a sensitive woman, she was not a compassionate woman, she was not a nervous woman, she was a thoroughly selfish woman, for she had been reared in a selfish school, and yet she went eagerly towards the tunnel on light, hurrying, impatient feet. She knew not what she expected, all she could have told herself vaguely was that she "had had a terrible dream."

It was a lovely summer night and the cold moon with her soft light that seemed to come from the world of dreams looked sweetly cruel, perchance, to the eyes of some who lay there suffering before their anguished eyes.

Cecilia Pomfret pressed on with a wild fear at her heart of she knew not what; she went forward, and then she uttered an appalling shriek.

Whithing on the ground was a female figure; as for the face—

But it is needless to dwell upon details too terrible to meet the eyes of the sensitive, the nervous, the faint-hearted.

Let us then state briefly what had happened.

A woman who half an hour before had been vigorous, handsome, insolent in her splendid physical health and animal spirits, this woman lay with a broken hip joint and crushed leg on the short green turf by the railway cutting.

She had been very handsome ten minutes before, now she was hideous—the scalding water from the engine had literally boiled away a portion of her face; she had saved her eyes, and they gleamed black and brilliant and wicked out of the scarred face which had so short a time since been beautiful, and notwithstanding the fearful torture this woman was suffering she was perfectly conscious.

"Kill me, kill me, kill me," she kept on shouting. "I am hideous; cover me up—kill me before anyone sees me, before he sees me. Keep him away from me—Henri, the duke, my husband. I should have been a duchess if I had lived. Kill me, kill me!"

Nobody paid any very especial attention to the particular ravings of this particular sufferer. Bandages, brandy, and other things were carried about; kind words were spoken; the dead were laid aside. But when we said nobody paid any heed to this especial woman we spoke hastily. The moment Cecilia Pomfret heard her voice she rushed to her and sank down on her knees by her side.

"Sister!" she gasped. Victorine looked up; she was a wicked woman, she uttered a malediction on her sister.

"Why you," she said, "who were so much plainer than I was, for I was the finest woman in France, you are a beauty to me now. Ask one of those men to kill me."

At that moment Cecil Renfrew came up with a flask of brandy which he held to the sufferer's lips.

"Drink some," he said, "it will revive you."

She drank some, her black eyes were fixed on Cecil's face.

"I wish you would kill me," she said. "I shall become insane if you don't and commit murder. I shall never now be the Duchess of Montalbert. I that was Victorine the Beautiful, and who drove a fair marchioness wild through jealousy."

Cecil recoiled as if she had struck him when he heard that name.

Amid all that fearful noise and confusion and suffering he was now conscious of but one thing: the cruellest enemy of his lost love lay before him, hideous, crushed, helpless.

"Fearful retribution," he murmured, unknowing that he had spoken aloud.

Victorine answered by a shrill laugh.

"He is as bad—her husband. Oh! if he is half dead, mutilated, made ugly I can die content. But to leave him perhaps to return to her—"

At that moment some men who had been struggling to lift part of a heavy carriage succeeded in rolling it back. A fearful groan came from the cutting.

"That was his voice," cried the wretched Victorine. "I know the voice of Henry, Duke of Montalbert—duke, indeed, now, for his father is dead. Is he hurt—is he dying? I hope he is."

They lifted up a tall, strongly made man when they had removed the heavy pieces of wood and iron that had fallen upon him, and laid him on the grass close to the fearfully disfigured Victorine Sala.

Cecil raised a lantern and the light disclosed the drawn, white, changed face of Henri, Duke de Montalbert, the richest noble in Europe.

He opened his eyes, and in an instant recognised the secretary. A change came into his white face.

"You!" he gasped. "And she—where is Kate, my wife? Young man, I believe her to be a pure saint. She only left me because I acted like a fiend to her, and broke her heart. And do you know where she is? If you do bring her to me that I may beg her forgiveness. I will, if I live, make my will and leave her all I possess. That fiend Victorine Sala shall have nothing."

He was not wandering in mind, he was perfectly cool and collected, though the vultures of remorse and rage were tearing at his heart, and his bodily sufferings were simply terrible. He said again:

"I will make a will and leave everything to

my wife. I know I am dying—I am crushed inwardly. Don't send for a doctor, send for a lawyer, and let me make my will."

And Victorine heard every word. She was suffering tortures of body under which any woman less strong would have relapsed into unconsciousness, but the constitution of Sala was of iron, hence her agonies were intensified, for she was fearfully injured.

She groaned and she moaned, but she would not speak, it would have been worse than death if Henri had looked upon her disfigured face.

"Take me away somewhere, send for a doctor, perhaps something can be done for my face," she said.

It was her sister Cecilia whom she addressed. That unworthy woman was by no means an affectionate sister, but what human pity there was in her was stirred by the sight of her sister's sufferings. She spoke soothingly.

"Yes, a doctor may cure you, we will send for a doctor. Have courage—cheer up."

Meanwhile Cecil had made Henri de Montalbert drink some brandy.

A carriage drove up and into it were lifted these two who had been lovers, and, of late, guilty lovers.

Victorine had known some time that her actual power over the man was waning—possession had palled upon him. Nevertheless, he would have married her if a divorce could have been procured against his pure and innocent wife—not because he loved her, but because he was afraid of her, and she knew this. But now he was dying he was filled with remorse for his sins, he was afraid of the Infinite Being whose holy laws he had broken.

He was no longer afraid of the great, bold, painted, bad woman who had led him to ill-use his lovely wife, and she knew all this by instinct, and it humiliated her to the dust to reflect that what charm she had possessed was gone for ever.

She could not hide her terrible purple face with her hands, but she lay back in the dark carriage, and she even stifled her groans, for she would not have had Henri see her or guess who she was for the whole world.

They had been travelling together into Sussex, having intended to set sail from Newhaven to Dieppe, and thence to have proceeded to Paris and to Lausanne.

But the duke never once asked for his paramour—never once expressed the least anxiety respecting her—he was, perhaps, in too much pain, but that did not prevent his continually calling for Kate, his wife, and for his family lawyer, that he might make his will.

Cecil answered him soothingly.

"I will do all you wish," he said. "Calm yourself if you can."

They reached the little inn, and the patients were carried in by strong, ready hands.

"The Duke of Montalbert," said Cecil to the landlord, "one of the richest men in France."

They laid him in the best bed chamber, and a doctor was telegraphed for from town.

A whole week has passed away. News of the fearful railway accident has filled the papers. Many homes are made desolate. Some sufferers only slightly hurt have so far recovered as to be able to leave the village where they were first lodged, and return to their friends. Numbers were killed on the spot, and there was a melancholy couple of days devoted to the identifying of the bodies.

Several were buried in the parish church below in the valley, and in nearly every cottage in the village lay a patient.

There were several at the inn, and a large barn presented the appearance of an ambulance. But we who tell this story have only to do with two of the patients—Henri, Duke of Montalbert and Victorine Sala.

The duke was injured internally, his ribs were broken, and were pressing on his heart.

He had not ten days to live, said the two eminent London surgeons who attended him

daily, one in the morning and the other at night.

Only ten days to live, and he knew it. He was not a coward. His whole soul seemed penetrated with a bitter sense of his overwhelming sin. All he craved for was to see his wife, to obtain her forgiveness, to make his will in her favour, and that of her child, if by chance she had one by this time alive.

And he did make his will, and Kate was advertized for in the papers in these words—"Kate, Duchess of Montalbert, return to your husband and forgive him. Apply at the office of Messrs. Merton and Cox, Lincoln's-inn-fields."

But Kate, in the tiny chamber behind the sweet-shop in Marybone-lane, did not see any newspapers or hear any news. She had recovered her senses and was slowly regaining strength, but the doctor forbade her to read anything, and thus she knew not what great events were befalling her.

Her little babe was a boy strong and beautiful, though poorly clad in cheap, gaudy prints and cotton pinafores.

Kate had not yet told Mrs. Candy her name or her position—a certain feeling withheld her. She fancied these good people might not believe in her honour if they found out that she was a runaway wife. Her mind ran only on the family of Sir Andrew Paget in Cavendish-square. She said to herself, "If I can get there, those good people will receive me, but I should not like them to come here and see me in this poor little house. What would they think?"

Kate's son, the little Marquis de St. Germaine, was now seven weeks old. Kate was out of danger; more, she was fast regaining strength. Something like hope even had crept into her heart when she looked on the sweet face of her babe, who lay slumbering beside her on the pillow, his naked dimpled arms curled round his cherub head.

Kate herself was up and dressed in a dark, loose gown of gay-flowered pompadour calico, on her head was a cheap snow-white dainty cap. She looked lovely.

She sat on an American cane chair with chintz cushions.

Before her was spread an humble repast—tea and sugar, milk, bread and butter, and a new-laid egg fresh boiled.

The window of her little room was open, for the day had been sultry. The sun was going down. The window was open, but the said window only looked into an ugly little back yard. However, on the window-sill were four pots, in each of which bloomed a beautiful geranium.

The door opened, and Mrs. Candy came in. "Is the baby awake, ma'am?"

"No, Mrs. Candy, fast asleep, precious little love," Kate answered. "But sit down; I want to talk to you, I feel so much better. I am sure it won't hurt me to talk to you. You must have been to great expense on my account, Mrs. Candy?"

"Not a bit, madam. I was forced to pawn your beautiful things because you and the child wanted ever so many clothes. But there has been enough to bring me, besides, seven shillings a week for this room, which is all I can ask for it. Take your egg, ma'am, before it gets cold."

Kate began to eat her egg and a slice of bread and butter.

"Won't you have a cup of tea, Mrs. Candy?"

"Yes, my dear, if you can spare one, for I am hot and thirsty."

Behold the young Duchess of Montalbert sitting down to tea with the humble mistress of the sweet-shop.

Presently Mrs. Candy heard somebody rapping the counter in the little shop.

She arose and hastened out, and presently returned with Dr. Green.

That individual looked at Kate in some surprise in her pompadour dressing-gown and white cap; certainly she was pretty, but three was a style about the young woman which he

did not approve of. To him it looked like a wish to return to a mode of life which he rightly characterised as evil, for nothing in the world short of absolute proof would have made Dr. Green believe but that Kate had been some poor milliner led into error by some man of fashion and then deserted by him.

"Well, Miss Kate—I think I have heard you call yourself Kate—are you feeling better?"

"Much better, thank you, but I am not Miss Kate," and she flushed and pointed to the sleeping cherub.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders with a cold and unbelieving smile.

"I wish I could believe you," he said, as he took a chair and looked steadily at Kate.

"You would hardly believe me if I told you who I was," said Kate, "and I do not like to publish my husband's name. Perhaps he is sorry; perhaps he is looking for me. Oh, I wish I could see a newspaper."

"You must not for a week, at least," said the doctor, "but, depend upon it, the man you call your husband has not troubled himself to look for you. Men who behave as badly as he has behaved are seldom penetrated with much remorse, and they do not know the meaning of the word pity."

Kate's large eyes filled with tears. "How does this doctor know so much about Henri?" she asked herself.

"I did not know that you knew my history, Dr. Green," she said, softly, "but I suppose I have dropped hints during my illness?"

"Yes," said the doctor, "you have talked of the cruelty of your Henri. What a pity you ever trusted him."

"And yet it was my duty to trust him," said Kate.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders again.

"When you were in that unhappy condition of being linked to such a man, I suppose you could not help yourself," he said. "But you have not told me your name."

"Kate, Marchioness of St. Germaine," she answered, with a blush, "I am the daughter of the Earl of Belgrave."

"Bless me," said the doctor, to himself, "her head is wrong, and I thought the milk fever was gone."

He got up and seized her hand. "Let me feel your pulse," he said.

Kate submitted. The doctor looked puzzled.

"You don't seem feverish," he said. "Put out your tongue."

Kate obeyed.

"Now," said the doctor, sitting down again, "what do you mean by telling me that you are an earl's daughter? I know girls of your stamp are clever in making up these kind of tales, but you can't impose on men of the world—the idea is absurd. Tell me quietly who you are and I will try to help you to lead a good life."

Kate turned pale, her eyes flashed.

"You insult me, sir."

"My good girl, those kind of airs don't deceive me. I know you have had a fair education; you are probably the daughter of a shop-keeper or farmer, or—"

At that moment Kate uttered a low, glad cry. A young man had walked through the kitchen to the ugly little yard and was examining the flowers in the pots on the window sill; he had not seen her.

The young man was Cecil Renfrew. He was pale, shabbily clad, and looked very sad.

"Cecil! Cecil! Cecil!" she cried, and she sprang up and opened the window wider.

"How did you know I was here?"

Cecil started back, white as death, but there was a glad light in his eyes.

"Lady Kate," he said, "your husband the duke is advertizing for you in all the papers. Why have you remained silent?"

Kate uttered a cry.

"They would not let me see a paper. They would not let me write a letter. They would not believe even that the Earl of Belgrave is my father. Oh, tell me all, Cecil, tell me all—I am dying to hear."

(To be Continued.)



[A NEW-FOUND TREASURE.]

ELOPEMENT BY PROXY.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUARTETTE.

THE ocean steamship *Urania* had touched the shores of Old England. Passengers of all classes and nationalities were pouring over the gang-plank and mingling with the throng which crowded the wharf. A sorrel pony harnessed in pale brown leather, and attached to a handsome dog-cart, stood conspicuous in the mass of people. The occupants of the dog-cart were a young lady and a young gentleman, evidently brother and sister. They gazed with idle curiosity and amusement upon the anxious crowd, frequently turning to each other with smiles and laughing words, as one and another of the incidents or characters of the scene excited their mutual mirth.

But at last the people began to disperse; all the joyful, pitiful, or ludicrous events attending the arrival of an ocean steamer had occurred; and the young man was turning his horse's head with the hurrying crowd, when his sister touched his arm.

"Wait a minute," she murmured in his ear. "Look at that handsome young fellow coming over the plank, with his sister on his arm, for all the world, Del, just like you and I, indisputable twins!"

The young man turned his eyes in the direction indicated.

"Ja!" he ejaculated, loud enough to be heard by the young travellers; adding, sotto voce, "That's a Dutch duet, upon my word! Can't we collect German scraps enough to make the quartette?"

"Oh, Del, suppose we try?" whispered the girl, her lovely face lighting up with mischief. "It would be so nice to play *parlez-vous* with somebody else beside the old French master. Dear me! do you remember 'how-de-do' in German?"

"No, 'pon my word I don't—but it's getting on towards dark, and I've something that will do."

The young man turned to the immigrants, while his sister, half frightened, half ashamed, at such sublime audacity, hid her sparkling eyes behind his shoulder.

"Guten abend, mein freund," said Delevan Marvin.

The young German looked up in amazement at the spruce dandy, with his handsome face and elegant costume, and pert, moustached lip, still elevated with its atrocious endeavour to discharge German consonants, regarded him curiously for a moment, and then burst into such a hearty, rolling peal of laughter that its influence was irresistible. First Delevan, then his sister, and finally the demure German maiden, joined in.

"Excuse me, sir, and madam," exclaimed the young Teuton, in excellent English, as soon as

he had recovered from his mirth; "but the gentleman's accent reminded me of the 'thin echo' at Mittelholle. I will tell you about the thin echo. There is a place in the lake at Mittelholle where two great rocks shelve down toward each other. They are several rods apart, and boats can pass between. When a person shouts, the sound strikes one rock, and part of it runs up the shelf and goes over the top, part of it comes back and passes you, strikes one other rock, and goes over the top also. Only a very little sound is left for the second echo, and it doesn't seem a bit like the big, deep German word first shouted. *Wilhelmina* and I went out there once, in a boat. It was just after sunset, and I shouted between the great rocks 'Guten abend.' Then came the thin echo, and it sounded very like your German, my friend—all the gutturals had gone over the shelf."

Mildred Marvin listened in astonishment to the loquacious foreigner, as he rattled on in his deep, rich voice. She was too much surprised to be amused even. Beside, the young man's face and bearing excited her admiration, not less than her curiosity. As he ceased, and turned his eyes merrily upon his listeners, the German caught a glance from Mildred which seemed to paralyze him. He stood motionless, with half-open lips, apparently unable to withdraw his eyes from their fascination. His sister observed it, and gently pressed his arm.

"Ach!" muttered the frank, unsophisticated fellow, as though awakened from a bad dream; then, lower, "Thanks, Minna." Bowing, he hurried away, and the twain were soon lost from sight in the slowly-moving crowd.

"What in the world," exclaimed Delevan, "possessed you to cast one of your terrible glances at that poor innocent? We might have had no end of amusement out of him. And what a demure beauty the sister was! Why couldn't you have forborne?"

"Why, Del," laughed the little coquette, "he was so handsome, and he looked at me, and—and—what else could I do? You know I am not the kind of a person to carry a Cupid's bow; it ought never to have been given to me."

"That's so!" muttered Delevan, savagely, striking the delicate piece of horseflesh which stood before them with his ribboned whip. "That's so."

CHAPTER II.

AN UNGOVERNABLE PAIR OF EYES.

It was a cold, blustering night in November, and Mildred Marvin, with some half-dozen young lady and gentleman friends, was sitting in the bright drawing-room of her father's mansion.

"Hark!" cried a merry brunette, with a blush starting upon her cheek. "Isn't that cousin Del's step? I'll warrant he's found your young German, Milly. How he tosses off his overshoes and wraps! He's in a dreadful hurry to tell us something."

"Eureka, Mill!" cried Delevan, rushing in at the door, through whose keyhole his cousinly admirer was peeping, and nearly upsetting that young lady in his zeal. "There—by-the-by, I've told you!"

"Told me what, you dreadful tease!" answered Mildred.

"About your German friend."

"Oh, Dell! have you found him?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"I told you once."

"No, you didn't!"

"What did I say when I first came in?"

"Eureka, Milly—or something of that sort."

"No, I didn't!"

"What, then?"

"Eureka Mill—that's where he is, book-keeper for the firm. I ran against him in the street. Was going along, with my head down against the wind, when out popped someone, from somewhere or other, and started to go past me on the left side. Of course, I wasn't expecting such a

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barbarous trick as that, and plumped into the fellow. It smashed my new hat over my eyes; but I began to apologise in the dark, and he began to beg pardon too. The minute I heard his voice I knew whom it belonged to, and thanked my lucky stars that the wild goose was actually bagged. If you would believe it, he hadn't the remotest recollection of me—bowed a few times, and hurried on. Well, I followed him until I saw him go into the warehouse of the Eureka Mill, and then through the window beheld him mounting the tripod of state, and opening the big ledger. Now, fellow conspirators, you have the clue. It remains for you to twist it with the threads of your plot. I am going to take an honourable furlough."

So saying, the speaker cast himself into a large easy chair before the fire, leaving the busy coterie to their schemes.

"Who is to do the bewitching?" cried Mildred, raising her merry voice above the confusion.

"You, you!" responded her companions, in chorus. "Why, how could you ask such a foolish question?"

"No, no—I resign in favour of Cousin Bess. She is more of a veteran than I am, and knows just where 'discretion should assert itself the better half of valour,' as Mrs. Hamlin puts it."

"The idea," exclaimed Bess, "of my taking precedence of you in such an engagement—you, with those terrible, glancing weapons of yours! Beside, you can probe the old wound, you know."

"Yes, yes! Mildred for captain!" cried the little group, with acclamation.

"Well, then," assented the beauty, "you must all obey my orders."

"We do faithfully promise to love, honour—" began Harold King, a blonde, broad-shouldered Adonis.

"That's far enough, your majesty," interrupted Mildred, with a queenly bow, and a most significant glance.

Her lover subsided.

"Now, Del," continued the young lady, turning to her brother, "I want you to be ready, in just one week from to-day, to sacrifice that moustache of yours."

"How so?" exclaimed Delevan, tenderly caressing the feature referred to.

"Why, we are going to play a little farce, called 'Elopement by Proxy,' and you're going to be my sub, in the last act, you know."

"I protest!" cried the young man. "I appeal to the mercy of the syndicate."

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here," declared Harold King, in a sepulchral voice. "The oracle hath spoken—thy moustache must die."

"But did I swear fealty to this cruel maid?" pleaded Delevan, in a hopeless tone.

"Yes, sir—I heard you!" cried Bessie Lawrence, convicting him with a look from her brown eyes.

"Alas! And must I submit?" exclaimed the young man. "At least, I crave banishment from your illustrious scrutiny for the space of one month after the infliction of the penalty imposed."

"So be it," answered Mildred.

But a curious smile flitted over the face of Bessie Lawrence, which argued consolation for her cousin in his bereavement.

For several days Mildred Marvin drove out alone in the dog-cart every afternoon. Meanwhile a boding hush rested upon the little group of conspirators. They were awaiting in suspense the issue of act second of the play upon which they had ventured. Every day poor Delevan gave his moustache a daintier twist, and lavished upon it a costlier perfume. He was paying it the last honours due an innocent victim.

In the evening the coterie of actors would assemble in Mr. Marvin's drawing-room, to rehearse their parts, but especially to listen to Mildred's merry accounts of her flirtation.

"I have got him so that he follows my beck like a dog!" she exclaimed, on the fifth evening.

"All I have to do is to ride past a window of the Eureka office, give him a little sign with my finger, and pretty soon he comes hurrying down the street after me, all blushes and happiness,

with his big blue eyes fixed on mine, and there I can keep them just as long as I please. Sometimes I let him get in and ride a short distance; and he declares that he is in Paradise. I asked him, the other day, how he came to speak such correct English, having never been to this country before. He said that he had gained it all from books, with the help of a young lady who lived in the house where he lodged. 'What a pretty ring you wear,' I said. 'Yes,' the perfidious fellow answered, 'that is Jennie's.' Then I remembered that, in Germany, engaged persons always exchange rings, as a sacred pledge; and I asked poor Hendrick—he told me his name was Hendrick Miller—'How does it happen that you are wearing Miss Jennie's ring and talking to me so foolishly every day?' 'I don't know,' he said, turning to me with a startled, haggard look, 'do you?' 'Yes, Hendrick,' I answered, in a low tone, dropping my eyes, 'I think so.' 'Why?' he cried, hungrily bending his head till his smooth cheek almost touched my forehead. 'Because you love me better.' 'Oh, I do!' he answered, and his face sank upon mine; but I lifted up my eyes, and he recoiled as though I had struck him. There he sat, staring at me with that utter loss of self-consciousness which he showed upon the wharf. I never fascinated a human creature so completely."

"Present company excepted!" murmured Harold King, under his breath.

"To-morrow," continued the coquette, "I intend to lead him to his proposal. To-morrow, Del, you may shave off your moustache."

"I knew it!" cried Delevan, with a groan.

"What a misfortune to one's self and to others it is to have an ungovernable pair of eyes—eh, Bess?"

CHAPTER III.

THE WAY OF ALL THE WORLD.

"MR. MILLER, you are wanted in the private office," said one of the warehouse boys, approaching the book-keeper's desk.

Hendrick got down from his stool, passed through the sale-room, and knocked at a door, on which was painted the words: "Private Office."

"Come in," responded a dignified voice.

The book-keeper entered and stood in the presence of the mighty man of the firm, Henry Englewood, Senior.

"Sit down, young man," added the potentate, pointing to a chair.

Hendrick sat down, trembling and in a cold sweat, for he feared that his frequent absences from his post of late had been remarked, and that he was to be called to account for them. His apprehension, however, was without cause, for Mr. Englewood proceeded to take from one of the compartments of the safe a long slip of paper.

"Mr. Miller," he continued, with perceptible modulations of relief, as the strain upon his portly person in kneeling to open the safe was relieved by the successively easier positions which he assumed in rising, "Mr. Miller, you see this list of amounts due? It is absolutely necessary that it be in the hands of our London collector as soon as possible this evening. We have been unavoidably delayed about some of the items, and could not complete the list until late last night. Consequently, it must be conveyed, by some trustworthy person, with the greatest despatch. We have selected you, Mr. Miller, for the important duty, and assure you that you will not find such manifestation of confidence in yourself the last, nor the least, if the present trust is faithfully discharged. No expostulations, if you please—the risk is ours. You will arrange your duties, so as to catch the noon train for London."

"But, sir," demurred Hendrick, in great confusion, "I had made a private engagement for the latter part of the afternoon, and had arranged my work so as to meet it."

"Tush!" exclaimed the great man, "I had a

better opinion of your good sense. Business always before pleasure, young man. Allow me to ask if your engagement is of a business nature?"

Now, if Hendrick had not been of an honest and upright temperament he would surely have answered "Yes;" as it was, however, he said "No." Thereupon Mr. Englewood opened the door.

"You will fulfil the commission," he said, simply and firmly.

Hendrick walked out, scarcely seeing where he stepped. His heart was bitter in his throat; he was suffocated, amazed. How he ever managed to post his books, get into his overcoat, and walk home, was a mystery which afterward astonished him. That part of that day's life always remained a blur in his memory. The first thing which he could recall was seeing the kind face of Wilhelmina look into his with surprise as he opened the street door of their little lodgings.

"Wilhelmina," he said, in a dazed way, "you are almost as tall as I?"

"Yes, Hendrick—but you are going crazy?"

What makes you look so?"

"Wilhelmina," continued the young man, paying no heed to her questions, "you look like me."

"Yes," assented the wondering girl.

"Wilhelmina, could you act like me?"

"I should hope not," responded the maiden, with a laugh, "if this is a specimen of your actions."

Hendrick had reached the little sitting-room, and cast himself upon the sofa.

"Komm hier, Minchen!" he cried, with a great pleading tremour in his voice.

Wilhelmina ran to him in amazement, and sank by his side. In her emotion she too had forgotten the new tongue so faithfully spoken between them.

"Mein Bruder!" she cried, "sagt mir."

Her flaxen head lay winningly against his shoulder. Hendrick bent and kissed his sister.

"I dare not ask you what I would, Minchen," he said. "Oh, I dare not, for even your true heart would despise me then."

"Never, Hendrick!" exclaimed the girl. "I would do anything that you wish me to, for whatever you wish must be right."

"Poor child!" murmured Hendrick. "Would to Heaven this fire were out of my breast. Minchen," he continued, drawing her closer to himself, and speaking with almost incoherent rapidity, that she might not interrupt him before he had disburdened his heart, "sweet sister, I am in love. The beautiful lady has promised to be mine. She bade me meet her to-day at the railway station, and we were to be married in London to-morrow. But see; here is a business paper. It must be in London by this evening, and I must take it. But the lady thinks to meet me at three o'clock. She will go, and I will not be there. I know not where she lives, I know not even her name. I am mad indeed—mad with love. Minchen, for Heaven's sake do this for me. Go in my stead with the lady to London. Assume my character but for a few hours. I will surely meet you at the end of your journey, and all will be well. My love will forgive me when she knows all. But if she finds no one at the appointed place to meet her she will be offended, for she is a proud, beautiful queen, Minna. Then I shall never see her again."

Wilhelmina sat for a moment, and uttered no word. Tears were in her eyes; her lip quivered.

"Oh, brother," she sobbed, at last, "you were going to run away from Minna; you were going to leave her all alone in this great, strange city."

"Nay, before Heaven!" exclaimed the young man. "If my love could not return hither, I should have hastened to bring you to us. But, girl, can you not see that the waves are going over me—that I am not my old self, but am become my passion's self? By-and-bye, child, this raging will be over, and I can see other things beside those terrible eyes, which I yet love with unspeakable love."

Hendrick rose, and paced rapidly to and fro

in the little room. As he walked, Wilhelmina came and stood before him. She was very pale, and the long lashes of her eyes were yet moist with tears.

"I have thought it over, Hendrick," she said, calmly and firmly. "At first it seemed to me like a dreadful dream—then that I awoke, and you said it was true, and thrust it upon me again. Poor little Jennie! But it is the way of the world! Even the highest and the purest souls must change, as the stars fall and the sun is darkened. Hendrick, I will bring your love to you. It is my heart's urging."

"Heaven bless you, Minchen!" said the young man, "and if any sweet thing can be added unto you, may it be that, ere long, your heart too shall go the way of all the world!"

CHAPTER IV.

A WOMAN'S SWEET WAY.

It was three o'clock p.m., and in the station stood impatiently the locomotive engine, with its line of carriages. Already the bell had rung; the driver was standing with his hand upon the engine whistle waiting for the guard's signal. At this moment there hastily came upon the platform a very handsome young man wrapped to the very ears in an ulster overcoat. He walked rapidly to the door of the ladies' waiting-room, and glanced in. As he did so the guard shouted, "Right away!" and resumed his talk with a lady, who was apparently requesting him to delay his train for a few minutes longer.

"It will be impossible, madam," he declared. "Ah! there seems to be the young gentleman now."

The lady turned quickly, as did also the young man referred to, who was still peering into the ladies' waiting-room. Their eyes met, and the recognition was mutual.

"Oh, Hendrick, how anxious I have been!" whispered the girl, in a hoarse undertone. "You have quite frightened my voice away."

Hendrick made no reply, but gazed curiously into the veiled face. Then he led the lady to a carriage, and assisted her to enter. The guard raised his hand, the whistle of the engine blew, and the train rolled out into the frosty air. The lovers chose, as by mutual consent, a seat upon the darker side of the carriage, and sat down beside each other in thrilling silence. The lady did not raise her veil, however, nor did the gentleman turn down the collar of his overcoat.

Away sped the train, swift as the wind, over bridges and dizzy banks, and through the cloven hills; but the hearts of the young fugitives beat faster and more furious still. Shyly they nestled together, till they could feel the swelling and sinking of each other's bosoms; and ere the spires of the great city had faded on the sky their hands had stolen into one another, and, in true honeymoon fashion, their heads reposed together upon the plush-covered back of the seat. But the passengers around them remarked, with smiles, that it was the gentleman's corner that had been invaded, and that the lady's arm was thrown across the back of the seat, and fell lovingly upon the rough, shaggy ulster!

But, even while the merriment sat upon the passengers' faces there came a shock, a shriek, which scattered the smile into a thousand sharp lines of agony, as a beautiful vase falls into a chaos of keen fragments.

The carriage leaped, struggled, tossed, and reeled.

Its quick, heavy plunges, its strainings and groanings, benumbed the aching faces at the windows.

They clung in a stony, paralysed stare upon the glass, and saw the ground soaring up to meet them, or the sky swimming down upon the earth.

When the first terrible crash came—another, and another, and the blue heaven kaleidoscoped with the black earth, the gracious hand of Nature sank upon her children, covered them

with a senseless stupor, closed their eyes, and hushed their moans.

So they came, beaten and bruised, yea, wounded even unto death, to the foot of the embankment, and there lay still, with the cruel fragments upon their necks, and breasts, and faces, for a coverlid.

But not all.

From the midst of the debris and the flames rose up three or four pale sufferers, pressed their hands upon their brows, and went staggering up and down, and peering into the white faces that lay in the midst of the fragments.

A strange figure moved among these searchers, but in the woe and terror of the time no one heeded its strangeness.

It was clad about the lower limbs with a woman's skirt; above this the clothing was that of a man, except that there hung about the shoulders, by its dainty ribbons, a girl's hat.

There were burnt spots upon the dress on breast and arms, from which, evidently, some outer covering had been hastily torn.

Hither and thither ran this woeful figure, flinging fragments of the wreck from body after body, but leaving them each with a moan, and hurrying on.

At last the searcher stooped, with a questioning cry, and lifted tenderly from the ruin a limp, motionless figure, enveloped in a huge overcoat.

Hastily removing this, and snatching off also the crushed hat, behold, a long coil of flaxen hair rolled out before the rescuer's eyes, and there appeared the lovely, unmarred face and perfect form of a maiden.

A few feet away, through a culvert, flowed a small brook.

Delevan Marvin—for it was indeed he, in the character of his sister—brought from it, in the hollow of his hands, a few cool drops and scattered them in the face of the girl.

Thrice he repeated the act, groaning with despair as she stirred not. But the fourth time he brought his palms flowing full, and let the chilly dash fall full upon the maiden's marble features.

She gasped.

In an instant Delevan was kneeling beside her, and chafing her wrists with his moist, warm hands.

"Minna," he cried, using the tender nickname which her brother had murmured on the wharf, "do you know me? Are you hurt?"

At the sound of his voice a soft flush stole into the marble cheeks and climbed upon the fair, low brow.

"Enough," whispered the young man to his heart. "She has answered both my questions, yes and no, in a woman's sweet way."

It was almost midnight; but still, in the elegant drawing-room of Mr. Marvin's mansion was gathered a merry group of young people.

"I wonder why he does not telegraph?" cried Mildred, impatiently. "It can't be because he is afraid our scheme will be discovered. No person in the world could make sense out of that combination except ourselves. It must be that the whole scheme has failed, and our 'elopement by proxy' has reached an untimely failure in the very last act."

While Mildred was yet speaking the door opened, and Delevan Marvin stood upon the threshold. Something white lay in his hand.

"What in the world have you got there?" cried the astonished group.

Delevan answered by advancing into the room; when slowly, timidly, as he moved forward, emerged from concealment an arm, a figure, a face—a lovely German girl.

"Wilhelmina!" cried Mildred, in amazement.

"Minna," answered the young man, drawing the maiden to himself, and imprinting upon her forehead a lover's kiss.

A proud, girlish figure glided past them and out of the room.

"Why, what's the matter with Bess?" ex-

claimed Mildred, always ready for new developments.

"It's only her sweet woman's way," said Harold King. "A man in the same place would have made a botch of it. That's right, Archie! There's no time like the best time."

Six hours later, Hendrick burst into the little sitting-room which he and his sister occupied jointly.

"Minna!" he called, without stopping to see whether she was in the vicinity or not. "It's best you didn't do it—Jennie's come!"

Then the big-hearted fellow cast himself upon the sofa, and rocked his knee with the most absorbing delight.

"She's grown wonderfully pretty too," he shouted to the silent walls. "Well, well, that's just a woman's sweet way!" S. S.

FACETIÆ.

"JUST OUT!"—(AT ALL THE LIBRARIES.)

(SCENE—First-class Railway Carriage.)

FIRST YOUNG LADY: "How did you like 'Convict Life,' dear?"

SECOND YOUNG LADY: "Pretty well. We've just begun 'Ten Years' Penal Servitude.' Some of us like it, but—"

OLD LADY (mentally): "Good gracious! What dreadful creatures! So young too!" (Looks for the communicating cord.)

—Punch.

ON A BREAD-PLATTER.

"WELL, Austin, can you read that?"

"No, mamma."

"Well, it is rather difficult. Those are Old English letters."

"Are they? Then no wonder the Ancient Britons couldn't read or write!" —Punch.

THE LONDONER'S EYE TO THE "MAIN" CHANCE.—Getting over it without being blown up. —Punch.

REPUBLICAN CRY FOR HENRI DE BOCHESPORT.—"A la Lanterne!" —Punch.

TAKING THE LAW IN ONE'S OWN HANDS.

FAIR BUT CONSIDERATE CUSTOMER (handing chair to shopwoman): "Pray sit down. You look so tired. I've been riding all the afternoon in a carriage, and don't require a chair." —Punch.

A FLY IN AMBER.—A cab of that colour. —Punch.

GROUND GAME.—Lawn Tennis. —Punch.

THE acrobat in the circus is really the man who introduces the spring style.

A WRITER on poultry-breeding says, "Fowls must have ample range to do well." And yet, says a friend of ours, it does not take such a very ample range to do a fowl well. Whether it is done brown or not depends altogether upon the cook's knowledge of the nature of the baste.

"THE LITTLE BASCAL."

MISS FLIRTINGTON: "Yes, I like the place very much, major; you have such a jolly set of men down here."

THE MAJOR: "Yes, awfully jolly. You'd better steel your heart, Miss Flirtington, in case of accidents."

MISS F.: "Well, while I'm about it, major, I'd rather steal somebody else's, don't you know?" —Fun.

A GOOD PLACE FOR BREEDING RABBITS.—Co(l)ney Hatch! —Fun.

A CHEST-KNOTTY POINT.

BEND OR and Tadcaster, whichever is which, are both chestnuts, it is stated. We are surprised at this. We imagined that the Bend Or difficulty had furnished the Duke of Westminster with a nut to crack far harder than any "chest-nut" ever proved. —Fun.

"MORE THAN SEVEN."

MABEL: "Give us a cake, auntie. I know you've got one in your basket."

AUNTIE (an early riser): "No, dear, they are roses I've been gathering, and they wouldn't like being given to a little girl who gets up so late in the morning."

MABEL: "Go on, auntie, they wouldn't mind, they lays in their bed all day, when they gets a chance, and nobody don't pick them. —Fun."

PUTTING THEIR FEET IN IT.

THE "World" writes of a certain ball, "It was on a grand scale." It was the usual scale, we suppose, used at such times—the scale of "two feet" to each dancer. —Fun.

"LAMP"—oons.—Libels written after dark. —Fun.

MIDSUMMER MADNESS.

WAGMORE: "Now, girls, what queen of antiquity surpassed even Titania in her fondness for donkeys? You give it up? Why, Dido, of course, for she fell in love with any ass—Assas, don't you see?" —Fun.

LUBBERLY DELUSIONS.—That the new steel corvettes in our navy are provided with steel-yards, and that they use these steel-yards to weigh their anchors with. —Fun.

It was the man arrested for stealing a mirror who discovered that he had taken a glass too much.

RETILED from the "service"—A broken tea-cup.

HEARTS of oak never "pine" away.

A MEAN (MIEN) ADVANTAGE.—Superiority of appearance. —Judy.

THE BRITISH PUBLIC.—The gin-palace. —Judy.

HINTS ON HOME ART.

The most strictly fashionable thing going is to have a Queen Ann-y goat's chaise to drive your babies in.

The simplest wisdom in house decoration is to go in largely for sage green.

The best way to give a refreshing coolness to your rooms in summer time is to have a frieze round every one of them.

The worst taste possible is to have your place pierced with too many windows, but a girand-ole or two is quite the rightest thing.

The greatest vulgarity is shown by having a number of things alike in your drawing-room. Yet three or four Simla rugs need not be objected to. —Judy.

HEAVY WEIGHTS.—Aldermen.

—Moonshine.

SAID a fond papa to his better-half, as he surveyed the ten olive branches consuming their morning meal, "My dear, truly we lead a butterfly existence." —Moonshine.

THE great auk laid an egg, and then has apparently become eggs-tinct. The egg has been sold by auk-tion, and realized an enormous price. There is a great auk about this wonder. —Moonshine.

"I'm not up to the mark," as the bullet said when it fell short. —Moonshine.

THE RAIKES' PROGRESS.—A long way (chronologically speaking) after Hogarth.—The Sunday School Centenary. —Moonshine.

INDIGNANT Females to Aged Friend: "And I can assure you, mum, all as I finds in the 'ouse was Styx. A nice thing to Char-on!" —Moonshine.

THE troops on their return from Windsor last week got thoroughly drenched. This is not to be wondered at, considering that the review was held in the reign of Victoria. —Moonshine.

A LOFTY theme for a poet.—The elevated railways.

A MAN who was induced, after much persuasion, to try some canned meat, brought it back showing the marks of his teeth on the tin, and indignantly denying that it was good to eat.

MR. GOSCHEN (who "didn't used" to do such things) telegraphs that the Sultan still believes in Lord Beaconsfield. Hence, he wants to nickname the Sublime Porte the "Ben door."

—Moonshine.

"DISTRESSED UNIONS."—Bad marriages.

—Moonshine.

THE EASIEST PLACE TO CRY IN.—The Eye-union Eye-lands.

—Moonshine.

WHAT the theatrical manager said when he found the dress-circle, second-circle, and upper-circle all empty, "Oh, ye tiers!"

—Moonshine.

HISTORY LESSON.

SCHOOL TEACHER: "Now, then! Next boy. George III. died in 1820, who came after him?"

SCHOLAR: "Dunno, sir."

S. T.: "Next boy, then!"

SCHOLAR: "The undertakers, sir!"

—Moonshine.

THE BEGGAN'S OPERA.—Any opera for which they give orders.

—Moonshine.

THE ENCOURAGING WORD.

WHILE trembling in the flush of youth,
Upon the threshold of our fame—
Just starting out mid hopes and fears

To gain a standing and a name,
How good to have a cheery word,
And feel the earnest, loyal clasp
Of some strong hand that takes our
own
Within its true and gentle clasp!

Cheered on, how small the dangers
seem,
The possibilities how great,
Though clouds may sometimes hide the
sun

And we may have to watch and
wait;
And, somehow, if along the way
Kind words shine out like beacon
lights,
Though "few and far between" they
be,
How glad they make the days and
nights.

The skies take on a deeper blue,
Reflected in the streams and rills,
And greener seems the emerald sod
That mantles all the vales and hills—
Grand steadfast hills that nobly stand
As monuments of power and might,
So like this changeless friend who
speaks

The needful word that guides
aright.

And as this friend hath been to us

So may we to some other be,
And grudge not kindly words and
acts

To voyagers on life's stormy sea

A word to cheer, a timely lift,

A look, a smile, a helping hand,

May bless full many a doubting soul,

Between this and the better land.

M. A. K.

STATISTICS.

THE Watchmakers' and Jewellers' Guild of the United States held a Convention in Chicago a short time ago. In his address, the President of the Guild, Col. R. E. P. Shurley, said that the demands of the trade now amount to 3,000 watches a day. Of this number the large manufacturing of the United States produce 1,530 a day, as follows: the Waltham Factory, 750; the Elgin, 500; Springfield, Ill., 80; Hampden Watch Company, 90; Howard, 20; Lancaster, 60; Rockford, 40. The number produced by

smaller establishments was not estimated. The great body of American watchmakers are native born.

THE COST OF KEEPING SOLDIERS.—A Paris journal has been calculating the average cost of soldiers in the various European countries. It appears that the annual cost of each soldier in the English army is £140. The soldiers of Austria-Hungary cost £51 each a year. Those of France and Germany £43 each. The Italian soldier costs a trifle less than £40, and the Russian little over £38. The maintenance of the army costs annually to each head of the population 6s. 6d. in Italy, 7s. 4d. in Russia, 8s. 6d. in Germany, 12s. 4d. in France, and 12s. 6d. in Great Britain.

CALIFORNIA'S GRAIN PRODUCT.—During the fiscal year just ended California has shipped about 680,000 tons of wheat (including flour) and 34,000 tons of other grain. As a larger area has been devoted to cereals this year, and good crops are now assured, the surplus for the coming year will doubtless be larger than last year's.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CEMENT FOR MENDING CHINA.—Make a thick solution of gum arabic with warm water, and stir in plaster of paris; use while warm and set the article away for two or three days to dry.

HOW TO BOIL AND STEW.—To do either properly the food must be immersed at the beginning in actually boiling water, and the water must be allowed to reach the boiling point again immediately, and to boil for five minutes. The action of the boiling water upon the surface of either meat or vegetables is to harden it slightly, but enough to prevent the escape of either juice or mineral salts. After the pot containing the food has begun to boil the second time, it should be removed to the side of the fire and allowed to simmer until it is done. This simmering or stewing extracts all the nutritious qualities of either meat or vegetables. The pot should be kept closely covered unless for a moment to remove the scum. The steam will condense upon the inside of the cover, and fall back into the pot in drops of moisture, if the boiling is slow. Do not think that rapid boiling cooks faster than the gentle process I recommend. After the pot once boils, you cannot make its contents cook any faster if you have fire enough to run a steam engine. Remember if you boil meat hard and fast it will be tough and tasteless, and most of its goodness will go up the chimney or out of the window with the steam.—M.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SERPENTS, scorpions, and large pinching-ants, are regarded in Egypt as transformed villains. It is believed that these reptiles and vile insects are wickedly disposed, and feel a pleasure in committing mischief.

WATER, when it becomes steam, is expanded 1,700 times its original bulk.

An Italian engineer has invented a steam bicycle.

NEVER does a man portray his character so vividly as in his manner of portraying another's.

It is something to be good; but it is far finer to be good for something.

HOMER is dear to every man's heart. He knows he can go there when all the other places are closed.

THE climate of North Africa might, thinks Dr. Theobald Fischer, be more easily improved by the planting of forests than by forming an inland sea.

IN Prussia one person to every 450 is insane. A Berlin scientist attributes this very large proportion to intemperance and educational cramming.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JACK JOLLY.—We insert advertisements in this page free of charge.

T. W.—It is a significant fact that the precise definition of the word "gent" is only to be found in the Slang Dictionary. "Gent" is said by this authority to be "a contraction of gentleman in more senses than one—a dressy, showy, foppish man, with a little mind, who vulgarises the prevailing fashion." As the "gent" is thus a product and representative of certain social conditions, there is a certain fitness in the word which characterises him. The Count d'Orsay once wittily said that "gent" was short for Gentle. This assertion had truth as well as wit, for Gentle, from the Latin gens, has the same origin as gentleman. The word "gent" formerly did duty as an adjective, old English writers using it to express the softer qualities of the female sex. A "lady gent," instead of being a lady's man or coxcomb, was an elegant or gentle lady, proving that an element of softness is associated with the word.

S. B.—Yes, the substance is similar, each being adapted to its particular purpose.

AGNES S.—All accepted stories are paid for; we are not, however, in need of contributions of the nature you mention.

HENRY.—The indestructibility of matter is capable of ready demonstration by preparing a couple of glass tubes of equal weight, each being filled with pure oxygen, and containing a few particles of carbon, free from appreciable amount of ash; that prepared from the fine loaf sugar gives very good results. The tubes are of precisely equal weight, and are hermetically sealed. By heating one of them the charcoal is caused to burn, and ultimately to disappear; the tube with contents, however, is of course found still to balance the other tube (which has not been heated), being of precisely the same weight as it was at first.

H. P.—No charge whatever.

MARIE.—Only by sedulous practice in imitation of good examples.

ELLEN.—Use corn starch, boil to smooth paste, cool, and starch the goods; dry quickly. Before ironing, dampen down in thin, raw (unboiled) starch water. A little gum-Arabic or pure white wax is often added to the boiled starch to afford fine gloss. Iron in the usual way; then dampen slightly with clean cloth and the starch (raw) water, and polish briskly with a polishing iron.

CONSTANT READER.—We do not recommend the use of depilatories; they are always dangerous. Carefully remove the superfluous hair with a pair of tweezers.

CLITIE.—Write to the editor of the "Milliner and Dressmaker."

EDWARD C.—Dip the copper in strong hot solution of potash or soda, rinse and dip for a moment in nitric acid, after which rinse quickly in running water.

T. M.—Baron Rothschild, the Duke of Westminster and the Marquis of Bute are reputed to be immensely wealthy, but we cannot tell you for certain who is the richest man in England. There may be millionaires amongst us, say, in trade, the amount of whose incomes it is impossible for us to estimate.

N. E.—Manufacturers of rubber belts recommend "a composition of equal parts of black lead and litharge mixed with boiled linseed oil, and Japan enough to make it dry quick." It is to be put on with a painter's brush.

GEORGE.—Since the resurrection of the Saviour of mankind the day of the week on which He rose has been counted the first and kept as the day of rest by most Christians. The decalogue did not fix the order in which the day should come, but the proportion of time—one day in seven. The first Christians took the resurrection day for worship and rest.

A. S.—The name arose from the custom of sending people on empty errands, or "fools' errands," on the first day of April. How this custom arose it is not certainly known. Oriental scholars think it is derived from the bull feast among the Hindoos, where a similar custom prevails. In France the fooled man is called poison d'Avril, meaning a silly fish, easily caught. In Scotland he is called gowk, which means a cuckoo.

ROYAL FUNNEL, twenty-three, fair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

T. H. K., tall, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

TED and FRED, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Ted is nineteen, fair, grey eyes. Fred is twenty, dark, good-looking. Respondents must be good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music, fair.

LENA and NELLIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. Lena is nineteen, medium height, handsome, brown hair, dark eyes, fond of home and music. Nellie is nineteen, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

K. D. and H. F., two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. K. D. is twenty-two, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing. H. F. is twenty-five, medium height, dark, loving, fond of home and dancing.

PEN WIFE, an amaranensis in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. He is thirty, dark, fond of home and singing. Respondent must be between eighteen and twenty-five, thoroughly domesticated.

FRANK S. and GEORGE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Frank S. is twenty-four, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of music and dancing. George is twenty-two, tall, fair, loving, fond of children.

COMING HOME FROM CHURCH TOGETHER.

The grand old elms were all o'er-spread
With leaves of shimmering green,
And here and there, through rifts of light,
The full-orbed moon was seen;
But naught cared Will, or winsome Nell,
For the breezy, bright spring weather;
They only knew they were hand in hand,
Coming home from church together.

Long years before, at the rustic school,
Together their tasks they plied,
Up Learning's steep and rugged hill
They journeyed side by side;
They had sought the sweet, arbutus blooms
In just such rapturous weather,
And oft had walked this same green path,
Coming home from school together.

But now they could not seem to phrase
The words they wished to say;
And she hid her eyes under drooping lids,
Lest her cheek should her heart betray;
But there came a moment, no matter when,
I am sure it was pleasant weather,
When he whispered the thought that was
Next his heart,
As they came from the church together.

And between the rifts in the shimmering
leaves
The moon peeped slyly through;
But the maiden's answer she ne'er revealed,
Nor would I tell if I knew.
But I know such roses never bloomed,
Not even in sunniest weather,
As glowed in that winsome maiden's cheeks
As they came from church together.

And I know that anon as I walked that path,
I heard young voices singing,
And from out the belfry, wide and high,
I heard sweet bells a-ringing,
And, lo! sweet Nellie, robed in white,
In the pleasant, dreamy weather,
And bridegroom Will, were hand in hand,
Coming home from church together. L. S. U.

H. F., twenty-three, medium height, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

M. C. and O. E., two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. M. C. is twenty-five, medium height, of a loving disposition, fair, good-looking, fond of music. O. E. is twenty-three, fair, medium height.

TINY, CONNIE and JULIANNE, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Tiny is eighteen, fair, medium height, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home. Connie is twenty, tall, brown hair and eyes, domesticated. Julianne is eighteen, tall, dark hair, grey eyes, fond of home and children.

CHARLEY, twenty-one, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

HARRY, twenty-three, medium height, dark, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty.

WINCH HANDLE and TRAINING WINCH, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Winch Handle is twenty-one, dark, fond of home and music. Training Winch is twenty-two, fair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. Respondents must be about twenty-one, or twenty-two, fond of music.

BEN BOLT, twenty-one, fair, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty.

S. G., twenty-four, tall, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

F. M. G., J. J. L., M. O. S., and T. M. B., four seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with four young ladies with a view to matrimony. F. M. G. is medium height, dark, fond of home and children. J. J. L. is medium height, fair, fond of music. M. O. S. is rather above medium height, fair, fond of home and children. T. M. B. is tall, dark, fond of dancing and children.

BEATRICE and JEANNE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony, both are twenty-three, dark. Respondents must be twenty-six, fair, fond of home and children.

A. G. and E. S., two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. A. G. is twenty-two, dark hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children. E. S. is twenty-three, medium height, of a loving disposition, fair, domesticated, fond of home. Respondents must be about twenty-four.

DORA, twenty, fair, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony.

ETHEL, twenty, hazel eyes, loving, medium height, fond of home, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-one, of a loving disposition, tall, dark, good-looking, fond of music.

C. F., sixteen, fair, loving, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be twenty, dark, fond of dancing.

GEORGE H., twenty-four, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

M. S., thirty-three, medium height, domesticated, fair, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

JAMES is responded to by—Gertrude, tall, fond of home and music.

G. W. B. by—Polly, eighteen, medium height, dark, fond of music and dancing.

FREDIVAL N. by—M. H., eighteen, hazel eyes, dark hair, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

FRANK G. by—L. F., twenty, dark hair and eyes, domesticated, fond of music and dancing.

D. W. D. by—Nina G., twenty, dark hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home.

TOM R. by—NELLY B.

W. J. S. and S. A. by—Nelly and May, two friends, eighteen and nineteen, both are medium height, fair, of loving dispositions.

Sax by—Beatrice M., seventeen, fair, of a loving disposition.

JOHN by—Florence L., eighteen, tall, of a loving disposition.

K. W. G. by—Dark Minnie, twenty-two, tall.

E. K. F. by—Fair Rose, twenty-one, tall.

WEST CHESHIRE by—W. V., forty-five, medium height, dark, musical, considered good-looking.

A. B. by—M. A.

ISABELLA by—H. S., medium height, fair, of a loving disposition.

ANNA by—W. P., nineteen, fair, fond of home and music.

WIDOWEE by—Mathie, a widow without encumbrance.

ROLAND by—LINDA P., tall, dark hair, blue eyes, considered good-looking.

AMELIA by—Tom, nineteen, tall, dark brown hair, fond of dancing and children.

POLLY by—Arthur, twenty, dark, medium height, fond of home and music.

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